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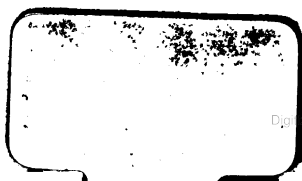
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LECTURES

ON THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

BY THE

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### LECTURE XCI.

LUKE XVII. 20-37.

“ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23. And they shall say to you, See here; or, See there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26. And as it was in the day of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32. Remember Lot's wife. 33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where-soever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”

THE Jews universally expected the coming of Messiah, and it was now generally understood that Jesus of Nazareth came forward laying claim to that character. On this occa-

sion, some of the Pharisees, without saying anything of his claim, though they were generally strongly opposed to it, asked of him "*when the kingdom of God should come.*" They evidently put this question under the influence of the prevalent error that the kingdom, or reign of God, was to be established by Messiah's appearing in outward power and splendour, overthrowing the enemies of the Jewish nation, restoring them to civil liberty, and worldly prosperity, and raising them to a high rank among the nations of the earth. Even Christ's disciples laboured under this mistake; and it was long before they were undeceived, for, we are told, in the 1st chapter of the Acts, that, when they were met together at Jerusalem, after his resurrection, they asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" The question here put by the Pharisees was very similar, though it was, probably, put in a very different spirit. Instead of fixing dates to gratify vain curiosity, our Lord took occasion, in reply to this inquiry, first of all, to explain what those who interrogated him completely misunderstood, and what it much more deeply concerns all to know, namely, the real nature of the kingdom of God, and the way of its coming. "*He answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.*" It does not come with any such external show or parade, as attracts the notice and admiration of the world. It is not made conspicuous, like the triumphs of earthly conquerors, and the coronation of earthly kings. But though it was not accompanied with the circumstances of splendour which adorn earthly royalty, it was not destitute of a glory of its own. Though there was no ostentatious display, there was no concealment in the case. It cometh not with scrupulous observation—so some understand the meaning to be: that is, it does not come in such a way as to be discerned only by some uncommonly sagacious men. It is not confined to any particular place, so that men may say, "*Lo, it is here*" only, or, "*Lo, it is there*" only. On the contrary, it is publicly revealed, and openly preached: and miracles are wrought before the people, in its confirmation. These things are not done in a corner, so that there is a difficulty in finding out the truth with regard to them, but in broad day, so that all may be informed. And, as no particular place could be fixed on where this kingdom was, to the exclusion of every other, so neither could any particular time to come be fixed on, at which it was so strictly

speaking to commence, as would imply that it was not in existence before. "*Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there!*"

"*For,*" adds our Lord, "*The kingdom of God is within you,*" or, as in the marginal rendering, "in the midst of you." The kingdom of God may signify the gospel, either as outwardly and generally introduced among a people, or, as inwardly and savingly influencing the hearts of individuals. In the former sense, it was true that the gospel dispensation was introduced among the Jews, whether they submitted to it or not. "There standeth one among you," or, in the midst of you,\* said the Baptist, "whom ye know not;" and Christ himself said to blaspheming Pharisees,† "The kingdom of God is come unto you." In this view some are inclined to render the passage before us: "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you, or among you." But however correct that idea would have been, the rendering in the text is the only rendering which the original word‡ can fairly bear—"The kingdom of God is *within* you." It is true that it could not be strictly said to be within those who were rejecting it; we may suppose, however, that Christ was not speaking in that restricted and absolute way, but intimating, in a more general way, the nature and seat of true religion, which was actually within all the people of God, and which, he taught, must be within these Pharisees too, before they could reap any benefit from it. His kingdom, which was God's kingdom, and the kingdom of heaven, was not like earthly kingdoms, which directly regulate men's political state, and directly rule over their bodies and property; but it was a spiritual kingdom, set up in the hearts of men, by the power of divine grace, under Messiah, the king and head of the Church. And this must be considered as its nature, and this as its seat, in every age. It comes, when it makes the ignorant wise to salvation, the proud humble, the guilty free, the unclean pure, and the profane holy. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," nor any thing external, "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Hence, though its effects are important and visible, its seat is secret and invisible, and the mode of its operation not cognizable by the senses. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

\* *Μεσος ὑμῶν* John i. 26.

† Matt. xii. 28.

‡ *Ἐντός*. Beza, however, contends for "among."

cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

What Christ said in the 20th and 21st verses, you observe, he addressed to the Pharisees, in reply to a question put by them; but, what he says in the remaining part of the chapter, he addresses to his disciples, whether at the same time or not we are not expressly told, though there is certainly a natural connection between the topics. "*And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.*" As applied strictly to the disciples themselves, these words reminded them that Jesus' bodily presence was to be withdrawn from them, and that they would feel and mourn the loss. "The days will come," said he before,\* "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." We are also told† that, when they thought of his departure, and of the troubles which were then to befall them, "sorrow filled their heart." In such circumstances, they would very naturally wish to have Jesus back again, that they might enjoy the comforts and advantages of his personal presence; but that could not be. Neither can any such desire which may arise in the minds of any of his followers, however believing and affectionate, be gratified on earth, in any age. Therefore, they should not cherish the expectation, or wish, but rest satisfied, nay, be delighted with, and carefully improve, the advantages, the superior advantages they possess in their Saviour's gracious spiritual presence, by the Comforter, who abides with them for ever. These words may also be considered as admonishing men to make the most of religious privileges while they have them. "Yet a little while is the light with you," said Jesus; "walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."—"While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." Though their candlestick should not be removed out of its place, though the means of grace should not be withdrawn from the part of the world in which they live, Christians should remember that they may be removed far away from that candlestick and those means, or may be shut up from them by infirmity, and thus, however earnest may be their desire, may no longer have it in their power to wait on public ordinances, on what may be called the days of the Son of man. Alas for those infatuated beings, who, having

\* Luke v. 35.

† John xvi. 6.



altogether neglected these means, or refused to be influenced by them, during their whole life, fall a prey to unavailing regrets, and to vain longings, were it but for one opportunity of salvation, which can never return again!

It seems probable, however, that what our Lord said in this verse referred, not only to what would be the feelings of his own disciples, but also, to what would be the desire of the Jewish people in general; and intimated that, having rejected him, who was the true Messiah, they would afterwards long for the person whom they expected under that character, and would be ready to listen to almost every false claim to it which might be put forward. This intimation was abundantly verified in the history of the false Christs, of whom we find more express mention in a subsequent chapter.

Supposing, then, what our Lord says, in the 22d verse, to refer both to the disciples and the unbelieving Jews, what he adds, in the 23d, will appear very appropriate in its introduction, and very plain in its meaning. "*And they shall say unto you, See here! or, See there!*" that is, Behold, Messiah is here, or Messiah is there—"go not after them, nor follow them." Though many false pretensions of this kind afterwards led astray multitudes of the Jews to their ruin, the Christians appear to have been almost all preserved from the delusion. When we look at the nearly parallel passage, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, which, however, appears to have been spoken at a subsequent time, we find it thus written: "Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not." In these words, our Lord foretold, not only the fact, but the very circumstances of the impostures. He speaks of some such deceivers appearing in the desert: accordingly, Josephus asserts that such was the fact, and gives particular instances of it, as well as of similar attempts in a more open way. The following is a quotation from the 8th chapter of the 20th book of his Antiquities of the Jews: "And now, these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And many that were prevailed on by them, suffered the punishment of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them. Moreover, there came out of Egypt, about this time, to

Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said, farther, that he would show them from hence, how at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down, and he promised them that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were thrown down. Now, when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and come against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, and did not appear any more." This last case is generally supposed to be the same alluded to in Acts xxi. 38, where the chief captain said to Paul, "Art not thou that Egyptian, who before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?"\* The Christians, as already observed, appear to have profited by this warning, so that few, if any of them, were, even for a time, led astray by such impostors.

Our Lord next goes on to inform his disciples that he, the Son of man, was indeed to come, but in a different manner, and for a very different purpose, from what the great body of the Jews expected. He was to come, not to deliver them from the Roman yoke, and to raise them to temporal grandeur, but to punish and destroy them; and he was to come, not in a hidden way, so that he was to be sought for in the wilderness, or in some secret place, but openly, and in a very tremendous way; and not personally and visibly, at least in the instance first and directly referred to, but providentially in his judgments: "*For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day.*" Let it be remarked here, that the explanation to be given to the whole remaining part of this chapter must depend on what we consider the time and event intended by the synonymous clauses, "So shall also the Son of man be in his day," "So shall it be also in the days of the Son of man," and, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Now, when the whole of this passage is read through, and especially when

\* See also Josephus' Wars, ii. 13, and vi. 5, and vii. 11.

it is compared with the very similar passages in the 24th chapter of Matthew, and the 21st chapter of Luke, it is abundantly evident that the common interpretation is the right one, namely, that which refers these clauses, and, of course, the whole passage, to Christ's providential coming to destroy Jerusalem by the Roman army, as typical of his personal coming to judge the world at the last day. The invasion of Judea by the Roman army was not secret, slow, or limited in its extent, but open, sudden, tremendous, and overspreading like lightning. In reference to the exact mode of expression in Matt. xxiv. 27, "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west," it has been remarked that the Roman army entered Judea from the east, and carried their devastations to the west.

"*But first,*" that is, before this awful visitation, "*must he,*" the Son of man, "*suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.*" In accordance with this intimation, he was "rejected and despised of men," rejected, especially by his own nation: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The rabble solemnly and formally rejected him when they demanded the release of a murderer, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas: away with this man! crucify him, crucify him;" and the rulers condemned him to death, "and delivered him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him." Now, this horrible crime not only preceded the overthrow of the Jewish nation, but was the great procuring cause of it. To quote from the parable of the householder,\* "Last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." "But they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." The infatuated people exclaimed, at the moment the crime was

\* Matt. xxi. 37.

perpetrated, "His blood be upon us and our children;" and that blood actually came on them, and still is on them, in the form of the most awful judgments. This crime filled up the measure of their iniquity, in connection with their habitual opposition to the gospel. In writing to the Thessalonians,\* the apostle says, "The Jews both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

Well had it been for the Jews, both in time and in eternity, had they taken warning by these and similar admonitions, to turn to the Lord. But as it is here foretold, so it proved in the result, that they continued, as a body, unbelieving, impenitent, and ungodly. Their conduct, in this respect, is illustrated by a reference to two portions of the Old Testament history, none of the circumstances of which, however, we are here called on to notice, except that of the resemblance in question. Notwithstanding all the faithful warnings of Noah, that preacher of righteousness, and notwithstanding the long-suffering of God waited in his days 120 years, while the ark was preparing, the antediluvians went on in their usual course of worldliness, as if there had been no danger, till the flood swept the ungodly race away. After the same manner, though they enjoyed the advantage of just Lot's example, and also, we may be sure, of his good advices and prayers ("for that righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds"), the inhabitants of Sodom continued to neglect every warning, and to go on, as usual, in the business and pleasure, not to speak of the gross sins of life, and never imagined themselves more secure than when they were on the very brink of ruin: *but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed;*"—thus shall it be with the generality of the Jewish people, at the time when Christ shall sensibly display his power in the destruction of their city and nation. And so it was indeed: for, notwithstanding the lesson read to them by the flood in its Scripture history, and in its tokens, in their part of the world, as well as in every other; and notwithstanding the

\* 1 Thess. ii. 15.

more limited, but almost equally striking warning, which was to be seen not far from their own borders, in the Dead Salt Sea, the Lake Asphaltites, which covered the spot where once flourished the cities of the plain; and notwithstanding all the warnings of the Old Testament prophets, of John the Baptist, and of Christ and his apostles; every account represents the Jews as going on securely in self-indulgence and self-confidence, till they were encompassed by the Romans on every side, and could no more escape than the antediluvians, or the inhabitants of Sodom.

*"In that day, he who shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away."* The houses in Judea, like most of those in Eastern countries, were flat-roofed; and the inhabitants were accustomed to go out on the roofs for various purposes.\* Our Lord, therefore, here directs his disciples, that, if any of them should happen to be on the roofs of their houses when the Romans were approaching to besiege them, they should not take time to go down into their houses to fetch their valuable articles, but should, as fast as possible, descend by the steps on the outside, and make their escape by some of the gates of the city. And so, if any of them should be working in any *"field,"* in the neighbourhood, he directs them, *"not to return"* home for any thing, but to fly to the mountains, or some remote part of the country. When the critical time arrived, the Christians remembered this direction, and hastened away, so that none of them perished in the siege. But, as a better opportunity will occur for giving an outline of the history of the destruction of Jerusalem, if we are spared to consider the 21st chapter, we shall not touch on that history here farther than is absolutely necessary for understanding the passage before us.

*"Remember Lot's wife."* The brief but extraordinary event here referred to is thus described in Genesis,† when Lot, his wife, and two daughters, were escaping from Sodom: "His wife looked back from behind him" (no doubt, with a sinful longing to return), "and she became a pillar of salt." Different opinions have been entertained as to the exact interpretation of these words.‡ Some think that nothing more is meant than that she was struck dead, and a pillar of rock salt, or, perhaps, merely a durable pillar erected on her grave; but that does not seem to come up to the mean-

\* See Lecture on Luke xii. 3.

† Gen. xix. 26.

‡ See Calmet and Le Clerc.

ing. Others think, that, being stifled by the fire and brimstone, she was arrested in a standing position, or rather fell down on the spot, with her body dried and stiff, like an Egyptian mummy which has been salted and embalmed. The common opinion, however, and the preferable, as it takes the description exactly as it stands, is, that her body, still erect, was on a sudden petrified, and changed into a pillar, or statue of rock salt. All agree that she lost her life, and became a perpetual monument of God's displeasure. Our Lord here admonished his disciples to remember this woman's fate, and not to imitate her tardiness and backwardness, but to make all haste to escape.

*"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."* Dr Doddridge's paraphrase of this verse, as applicable to the way of safety in the invasion and the siege, seems very judicious, and is as follows: "In that day, he that shall seek to preserve his life by retiring into some fortified city, and especially into that where it might seem he should be safest, shall lose it; but he that shall be thought to take the ready way to lose his life, shall preserve it; for they who regard my admonitions, and retire, however their conduct may be censured as imprudent, shall survive the general ruin." And so it is, we may add, for the most part, in times of danger that the way of duty is the way of safety. You will observe, that this is quite a different sense from that in which nearly the same words are used in the 9th chapter, 24th verse; for there our Lord speaks of losing life for his sake, and cautions professors against endangering the loss of their souls by unworthily shrinking before persecution.

In the next three verses, Christ tells his disciples how, *"in that night,"* that dark and calamitous season, Divine Providence would graciously, carefully, and powerfully interfere for the protection of such of his disciples as should be exposed; while others in the same circumstances should be cut off in the overwhelming destruction. In the case, for example, of two persons lying in the same bed, or grinding at the same mill, or working in the same field, the one should be *"taken,"* that is, seized by the Romans and slain, or doomed to imprisonment or bondage, and the other should be *"left,"* or rather, dismissed in safety.\* The process of grinding corn was carried on, in Eastern countries,

\* Ἀφίθηται.

in the same way in ancient as in modern times. It was done on a small scale, as the meal was needed. The stones used were not very large, but were such as could be easily wrought, and even carried from place to place. Hence, in part, the reasonableness of the Jewish law,\* “No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge; for he taketh a man’s life to pledge.” The upper stone was turned round with the hand; and one person was sufficient to work it, unless when it was more than usually heavy, or great despatch was required. This work was commonly performed by women. Such was the custom in very early times. “Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, All the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill.”† “Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon,” said Isaiah, “take the millstones and grind meal.”

You will observe that, however obvious the application of what our Lord is here saying may appear, he has never once mentioned Jerusalem, or fixed on any particular spot, as the scene of the predicted desolation. Hence, though we can hardly suppose that they could have been altogether ignorant of the general bearing of his words, room was left for the disciples to question him more directly on that point. “*They answered and said,*” that is, they addressed to him this question, suggested by what he had just been saying, “*Where, Lord?*” In what place, and on whom, is this destruction to fall? Nor did Jesus make any such reply to this question as fixed down and confined the prediction to any particular place, or any particular portion of the people. His answer was: “*Wheresoever the body*”—the dead body, or carcass—“*is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*” It is well known that birds who feed on carrion resort to the place where the carcass of an animal is lying: besides, we are told that flocks of birds of prey are often seen hovering around camps, to devour the dead bodies of horses and other beasts, and even of men. Thus, we have this description of the eagle in Job:‡ “She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the

\* Deut. xxiv. 6.

† Exod. xi. 5; Isa. xlvii. 2; See Harmer’s Obs., vol. i. p. 253.

‡ Job xxxix. 28.

slain are, there is she." Our Lord's answer seems to have been a proverbial expression, drawn from such circumstances as these, bearing, however, a much more extensive application than the literal meaning of the words conveys. Whether our Lord had the circumstance in view or not is uncertain, but many have remarked how appropriately this emblem describes the Roman armies, which had the figures of eagles for their standards. Wherever the impenitent Jews were, there vengeance overtook them. Doubtless, the scene of their most dreadful misery, and their most extensive carnage, was Jerusalem, with the immediately adjoining country; but the desolation was by no means thus limited, for, after the destruction of their capital, the survivors of them were pursued in the same relentless manner, not only in other parts of their own land, but in almost every corner of the world, not to insist on the cruelties to which their posterity have been subjected in many nations in subsequent ages. Such is the import of these warnings, as they relate primarily to the calamities which were coming on the Jewish nation. We shall notice their application to the day of judgment before concluding; but two or three lessons, of universal application, first call for our attention.

First, *This passage is quite inconsistent with the opinion that Christ will come again to reign on earth personally and visibly before the millennium.* There are some who hold that this is what is to be understood by the days of the Son of man, or the Son of man being revealed, or the coming of the Son of man, or the coming of the kingdom of God. They build this notion on such passages as Isa. lix. 20: "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob," quoted as it is, and applied in Rom. xi. 25: "Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." It requires, however, but a very slight attention to the scriptural style, to perceive that there is often no necessity for understanding the expression, "the coming of the Lord," literally; nay, that, on the contrary, there would often be the greatest absurdity in doing so. When God is said to "come down," to "come out of his place," to "visit" men, and the like, nobody ever supposes that any actual change of place, or visible manifestation, is intended; but the expressions are to be referred to



God's providential dispensations. When our Lord said to his disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you"—"If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," it was, surely, a gracious, spiritual, and invisible, and not a literal, bodily, and visible coming and abiding which he intended. It is said\* of that "wicked one" who supports the mystery of iniquity—"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." On this passage some have endeavoured to found the opinion, that it is the personal and literal coming of Christ that is to destroy Antichrist. But, by "the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming," it is more agreeable, both to the usual language of Scripture, and to the other references to that event, to understand the influence produced by the bright manifestation of the truth—by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God—by the gospel, rendered effectual by the Holy Ghost; though, no doubt, there will also be very striking dispensations of providence. Indeed, many passages which foretell the universal conversion of Jews and Gentiles, particularly notice the Spirit of God as the great agent. Thus, in the 32d of Isaiah, in which it is said, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment," the prophet declares that the land of his people shall be in a very deplorable condition, "Until the Spirit be poured upon them from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." So also, in the passage already partly quoted,† "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord," it is immediately added, as explanatory of the way in which this is to take place, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." And how does Zechariah‡ declare, in God's name, that the conversion and prosperity of the Church, and especially of the Jews, in the latter days, shall be brought about? "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they

\* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

† Isa. lix. 20.

‡ Zech. xii. 10.

shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him."

There will be a personal, bodily, and visible advent of the Son of God; but that will be at the end of the world, and just before the general judgment, as these expressions are commonly understood. His first personal advent was when he came into the world to die for our sins; his second, and only other personal advent, will be, as just stated, at the last day. Consider here the import of this passage at the end of the 9th chapter to the Hebrews: "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." This passage is as decisive of the question as possible. The first appearance here spoken of was unquestionably a bodily appearance; so therefore, to preserve the consistency of the words, must be the second appearance; but this second appearance is connected with the day of judgment, from which it is obvious that no other appearance of the same kind can take place between the incarnation of Christ and his coming to judgment, for if there did, then his coming to judgment would be his third, and not his second coming. As to the fancy which supposes the judgment to be the period of a thousand years, and which perverts so much of the Word of God, by applying most of its fine descriptions of heaven to earth, it proves the extravagance into which men may fall, when they give loose reins to wild schemes of interpretation. The second bodily coming of the Son of man will be for eternal, and not for temporal purposes. When he comes again personally, it will be, not to dwell with his people on earth, but "to receive them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also," even in his Father's house above. Mark well how Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians,\* describes the circumstances and the effect of our Lord's personal coming: "We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," that is, the generation of believers who shall be living on earth at that time, "shall not prevent," anticipate, or get before "them that are asleep," that is, shall not be changed before the bodies of the departed saints are raised. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of

\* 1 Thess. iv. 15.

the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain," after undergoing a change, *we*, the saints then alive—observe here, what is said; is it that they shall remain and dwell with Christ and the risen saints on the earth? no—"shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

From this it follows, that the reign of Christ on earth during the millennium will not be a visible, personal, and earthly reign, but an invisible, spiritual, and religious reign. "The Lord God will (thus) give unto him the throne of his father David."—"Unto the Son of man there shall be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom—therefore it exists now; it exists in all his people; he reigns at this moment over all who believe in his name, reigns over their hearts by his grace, and over their lives by his precepts. He reigns now without being personally and visibly present; and so will he reign during the millennium, only much more extensively and completely. The spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom is one of the fundamental principles of revelation. If we depart from this, we fall virtually into the same carnal notions which blinded the unbelieving Jews, and even impeded for a time the spirituality of the disciples. Let us hold the reply which our Lord made to the question when the kingdom of God should come, to be applicable universally, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

*Secondly*, but much more briefly, you should learn, from this passage, *the necessity of having the kingdom of God within you, that is, the necessity of sincere, inward, vital religion.* The kingdom of God is among you, in all its divinely appointed ordinances; it is actually within some of you in its saving and sanctifying efficacy; and it must thus be within you all, if you are to reap any advantage from it. If you refuse to submit to this reign, you must be borne down and destroyed by it. This King will say at last, "Those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." "Kiss the Son," then, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the

way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Be not contented with the form without the power of godliness—with having a name to live when you are dead. The name and profession of religion are necessary, but nothing short of the reality of it will be of any avail. Seek, then, to become the real subjects of God's kingdom: Seek restoration to his favour through faith in the righteousness of his Son, and to his image by the regenerating influences of his Spirit. Let him sit on the throne of your hearts, and study to honour him in your life and conversation. Pray that he would send the rod of his strength out of Zion, rule over you, and make you willing in the day of his power.

*Thirdly*, We may find in this passage a *warning to ourselves as a nation*. Our case may justly be considered as furnishing a parallel to that of the Jews, as in privileges so in sinfulness. Our nation is especially marked, as here stated, in regard to the engrossing business, cares, and pleasures of the world. General history proves great luxury to have been the forerunner and cause of national judgments and ruin. May God avert from us such a fate, and turn us from what is so likely to entail it! Let us beware, lest he who spared not the natural branches, spare not us, who are only ingrafted on that stock. When his judgments are abroad in the earth let us learn righteousness. Let us repent, and turn ourselves from all our transgressions; so iniquity shall not be our ruin.

*Lastly*, Let us carefully mark how instructively the greater part of this passage is *calculated to lead forward our thoughts to the great day of judgment*. The illustration from the deluge is obviously intended and calculated to have this effect. The earth, it is true, will never again be overflowed with water; "but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." The illustration from Sodom and Gomorrah is so intended and calculated; for "they are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." And the destruction of Jerusalem is so intended and calculated; for it is a shadow, or type, of the still more awful destruction of the ungodly at the last day. The best interpreters consider the two subjects of the destruction of Jerusalem and the general judgment as interwoven in the 50th Psalm, and still more plainly in the 24th chapter of Matthew. Let

Christ's coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, which has certainly taken place, be to us a proof of the certainty of his coming to judgment; and let the tremendous circumstances of the former event be viewed by us as a type of the still more tremendous circumstances of the latter. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."—"The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." His coming will be to men unexpected, even as that of a thief in the night. As to us, it may be nearer than we suppose, though, most likely, it is yet, strictly speaking, at a great distance. But there is another event equally decisive of our state, the event of our death, for, "as the tree falls, so it shall lie;" and that event cannot be far off from any of us, while to some of us it may be just at hand. Surely, we ought to be prepared for that event. "Be ye also ready," saith Christ, "for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Let us study to live in a state of preparation for death, by living a life of faith, holiness, and watchfulness. Let us take heed to ourselves, "lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon us unawares." The antediluvians, and the inhabitants of Sodom, are not charged here (however justly many of them might have been so) with gross crimes, and yet they perished; therefore, let us beware, not only of heinous sins, but of being engrossed with the business and cares of life. Let us remember Lot's wife, that we may avoid her tardiness, and hankering after the world. Let us not delay, but flee instantly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel. Let us neither turn back, nor desire to turn back. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Let us think of the separation which will take place between the nearest connexions by death and judgment, when, in more senses than one, one shall be taken, and another left; and let us seek to be united to those whom we love by a tie of grace which will be acknowledged in the world of spirits.

Let us feel persuaded that we cannot possibly escape if we be found under the guilt and power of sin; for "wheresoever the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together;" wherever the unpardoned and impenitent sinner is, there will the vengeance of God find him out. At the same time, let us feel equally persuaded that, as in the destruction of Jerusalem of old, so all who belong to Christ will be safe in the day of judgment, and for ever. "Gather my saints together unto me," saith the Lord, "those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself." Lord, grant that we may be all prepared for that tremendous day; and when we hear the voice of Him who testifieth these things, saying, "Surely, I come quickly," may we be ready joyfully to exclaim, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

## LECTURE XCII.

## LUKE XVIII. 1-8.

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

THIS is the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow. Luke is the only evangelist who relates it. In expounding it, we shall follow the plan of carrying the practical application of its several parts along with us as we proceed. Our Lord seems to have spoken this parable in connection with the warnings he had given of his providential coming to destroy Jerusalem, as typical of his personal coming at the day of judgment, for both which events earnest and persevering prayer was to be considered as an important part of the preparation. This view of the connection is supported by the words with which this passage closes—"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

In many cases, the moral, or lesson, of Christ's parables is delayed till the conclusion; but here it is distinctly announced by the evangelist at the beginning: "*And Jesus spake a parable unto them to this end, that men,*" or that they "*ought always to pray, and not to faint.*"

Observe here, first of all, *the incumbency of prayer*; it is a positive duty—men ought to pray. Reason requires it, and Scripture enjoins it. It is a proper acknowledgment of God's existence, perfections, providence, and grace. It furnishes an opportunity for thanksgiving for past favours, for confession of sin, and for supplicating every blessing we

need, pertaining either to life or to godliness. To cast off prayer is to be given up to impiety, and lost to all that is excellent.

Observe, farther, that this duty is *universally binding*; the rule is without exception—all men ought to pray. The law of God requires it universally; and let none presume to restrict the divine command, on the ground of any human theory, or on any pretence of exclusive privilege, or of false humility. Men of all stations and circumstances ought to pray. Men of all characters ought to pray. The unbelieving and ungodly ought to pray: they should pray that they may be converted and pardoned. Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." It is true that it is impossible to pray aright without faith; still, however, men should pray as they can, that faith may be given to them. The believing and the pious ought to pray, and will pray, for they have, not only much to acknowledge, but much to ask, and they "have received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father."

Again, we are here taught that men ought *always* to pray. The meaning is, not that they should be continually in the very act of prayer, for that is impossible; and if possible, would interfere with other duties which are expressly enjoined. But this teaches that we should, even with regard to the literal act of prayer, be very often engaged in it. We should have our stated and extraordinary seasons of prayer. We should actually pray on all suitable occasions. In this sense, we should always pray in secret, in the family, and in public. "As for me," says the Psalmist,\* "I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice."—"Seven times a day do I praise thee." Silent, ejaculatory prayer ought also frequently to be used, when full and oral prayer cannot be made. We should be ready to engage in prayer whenever called to do so, and should watch for such opportunities. And besides all this, we should live in the spirit of prayer, habitually turning to the Lord in our minds, and cultivating a frame of dependence on him. Thus, as the apostle says to the Ephesians,† we shall be "praying always with all prayer

\* Ps. lv. 16, 17, cxix. 164.

† Eph. vi. 18.



and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

Still farther, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." This may signify, either that they should not faint in prayer; or, that prayer is one of the best means of keeping them from fainting under trials. We are in danger of fainting in prayer, so as to discontinue it entirely, or to be discouraged and fall off in fervour, when it brings no sensible benefit, and the answer is long delayed. But we should persevere in the act of prayer, however trying our situation. We should "pray without ceasing." And we should also keep up a spirit of earnestness, and "continue instant in prayer." To persevere in earnest prayer is, also, one of the very best supports in time of trouble. "When my soul fainted within me," said Jonah, "I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple." "I had fainted," says the Psalmist, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

This persevering importunity is necessary as a proof of sincerity in prayer; for, he who asks any favour coldly, or soon desists, shows that he cares little whether he succeed or not. Job asks, "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" Such prayer as this is also necessary in order to success. Thus saith the Lord, by Jeremiah,\* "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Such prayer has, indeed, the express promise of being heard. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But, let us proceed to consider how the certainty of the success of importunate prayer is taught and illustrated in this parable.

"There was in a" certain "*city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.*" "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to David, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain." Of the great advantage of having upright magistrates and judges there can be but one opinion; nor can it be reasonably doubted that

\* Jer. xxix. 12.

the surest foundation for that uprightness is laid in true religious principle. Other principles (such, for example, as what the world calls honour) may, and, no doubt, frequently do, produce the impartial exercise of justice; but, while every innocent feeling of that kind is left free to operate on the mind, religion, or the fear of God, directing the conscience, can alone secure impartial justice in all circumstances. This connection is stated in most of the passages of Scripture which relate to the subject. Thus, Moses' father-in-law said to him: "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons."\*—"And Jehoshaphat said† to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." But this judge feared not God; he had no principle of religion to constrain him to exert himself to do justice to the lowly and the helpless. Neither did he regard man. This may signify that he neglected his duty to man, as well as his duty to God, as is commonly the case. But the meaning seems to be, that he did not care for the opinion of man. He was influenced neither by conscience, nor a regard to character; neither by religion, nor honour; neither by piety, nor policy. One who is in this state is justly considered as having arrived at a great pitch of worthlessness. This was the description of a most abandoned character with the heathen; thus, Dion Cassius says of the cruel and profligate emperor Vitellius, that "he neither regarded men nor the gods."‡ A judge so impious, and so lost to feeling, must ever be one

\* Exod. xviii. 21.

† 2 Chron. xix. 6.

‡ Οὐτε τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οὐτε τῶν θεῶν ἐφροντίζεν.

Σκετλῖος, οὐδὲ θεῶν ὅπιν ᾔδισατ' οὐδὲ τραπίζαν.

Odyss. xxi. 28.

See also Odyss. xxii. 39, 40, 414, 415.

Thucydides (book ii.) says of the Athenians, during the calamities of a plague, that neither the fear of the gods nor the law of men restrained them: θεῶν δὲ φόβος, ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος, οὐδ' εἰσπαύεργε. Quintilian says, a parricide must arrive at such a pitch of wickedness by a long course, and by contempt of the gods and of men: "Ad tantum nefas magnâ oportet serie parricida veniat, et per hominum deorumque contemptum ad ultimum nefas conscendat."

of the greatest curses to a people. Well may all unjust judges (let us be thankful that such have very rarely appeared in this country) even though they be not so bad as is here described, tremble at the thought of having to appear themselves before the impartial tribunal of God the judge of all.

On this description, we may remark, for our own instruction, that we should not be regardless of the opinion of others. It is true that we should not make human applause the rule, or motive, or end of our actions, but should follow the path of duty whether men commend or censure. Still, however, to be reckless of blame in doing wrong is positively sinful, and a proof of being on the way to ruin. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore shall they fall among them that fall; in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." Nay more, it is clearly our duty, while we have higher motives, to study to act so as to give no just cause of offence, or censure, to avoid the appearance, as well as the reality, of evil, and to stand well in the opinion of those whose good opinion is worth having.

In the city where this unjust judge lived, "*there was a widow, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.*" This woman appears to have been "a widow indeed." Not only had she lost her husband, but she had no near connexion, or kind friend, to espouse her cause; and, as it too often happens in similar cases, from human depravity, a certain avaricious and overbearing person had taken advantage of her bereaved and defenceless condition to defraud and oppress her. The narrative supposes that her cause was good, and that it was only justice she sought. She went to the judge herself to crave his interposition, saying, "*Avenge me of mine adversary.*" Our word, "*avenge,*" conveys an idea stronger than what is here intended.\* We cannot suppose that this good woman asked for any thing which could strictly be called vengeance, or revenge. "Dearly beloved, *avenge* not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The original word had here been better rendered, "*vindicate me,*" or, "*do me justice.*" She wished the judge to inquire into her cause, with the view of her getting her own, and being delivered from

\* *Εκδικησον.*

her oppressor. In this sense, rulers and judges are appointed for the very purpose of avenging, of seeing justice done to the wronged and oppressed, and of punishing offenders. In the language of Paul to the Romans,\* "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

The widow brought her complaint before this unjust judge; and the circumstances of the case warrant the supposition that she urged her suit often and earnestly, and would have continued to do so, however long it had been necessary. "The portion of Christian widows," says one,† "consists in affliction and the cross, in constancy and perseverance in prayer. It is from such a widow that we must learn to pray well, because she is an emblem of the Church, and of every soul which has no hope but in God. A widow who is desolate and oppressed, without relations, friends, substance, and support, what other refuge can she have but humble prayer, assiduous supplication, and importunate perseverance? Such is my soul in thy sight, O my God! and even more desolate, since it has not even the power to pray unto thee, unless thou vouchsafe to bestow it on me as a gift and an alms."

Judges are bound to manifest impartiality between the rich and the poor. "Thou shalt not countenance a poor man in his cause."—"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."‡ But, as there are particular temptations to overlook the cause of the poor and the helpless, such as widows, Scripture is very explicit in stating the duty of attending to them, and the sin of neglecting them. "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."—"Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the father-

\* Rom. xiii. 3.

† Quesnel.

‡ Exod. xxiii. 3; Lev. xix. 15.

less, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."\* For all kind attention to such we have the example of the great God himself: "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."† Let us think of this, and study, according to our opportunity and ability, to be followers of God in this respect. "I delivered the poor that cried," said Job, "and the fatherless, and him that had none to help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

The application which the widow made was reasonable, and it ought to have been attended to by whomsoever made; but this irreligious and regardless judge, having no principle of conscience to urge him on, and having nothing to hope from her gifts or favour, and nothing to fear from her displeasure and opposition, "*would not for a while*" listen to her suit, or pay any attention to her. - And so it is that much sin is committed against God, and much injury done to men by procrastination. Let us not delay what justice and mercy require, but set ourselves quickly and diligently to its performance.

Finding, however, that the widow was persevering in her application, the unjust judge resolved at last to take up and decide her cause. "*Afterward he said within himself*"—this was the reasoning which passed in his mind—"Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her," or do her justice, "*lest by her continual coming she weary me.*" This wicked man, you observe, was quite conscious of his wickedness, and yet did not resolve on or desire any radical and sincere change. And is it not so with many? While many unrenewed men are led to entertain a favourable opinion of their religious state by ignorance and self-deception, there are also many who cannot hide, and do not attempt to hide, from themselves their own ungodliness, who yet remain in that awful state, regardless of their everlasting welfare, and minding only their present ease and indulgence. What an infatuation!

The unjust judge resolved, it is true, to do what the widow craved, not, however, from any sense of duty, but from mere selfishness, and in order to get rid of her, that he might be no longer troubled with her. Let us, from this, learn not only to do what is required by the letter of God's

\* Isa. i. 16, 24.

† Ps. lxxviii. 5.

law, but to do it readily, and cheerfully, and from a regard to that law. In acts of justice, if we do not perform them without an urgency being brought to bear on us amounting almost to compulsion, we are proved to be hardly just; for, needless delay is injustice outwardly, and unwilling payment or performance is injustice at the heart. In acts of benevolence, too, that is not proper charity which is extorted. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" and that is doubly acceptable to man which is given, or done, readily and pleasantly. We may here observe, farther, that while it is a duty to avoid giving unnecessary trouble to others, those who are very ready to complain of trouble, speak in a way which is neither kind nor Christian, nor likely to give a favourable opinion of themselves, nor calculated to recommend what is good. In dealing with dependants, children for example, their superiors should take care to let them see that what they do at their request, they do, not because they selfishly wish to avoid trouble, but because they think it right and advantageous.

Here the parable itself ends, strictly speaking, though our Lord goes on to apply it, and to deduce from it the consequence in favour of importunate prayer. "*And the Lord said,*" that is, the Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, and we may add, he is now to be considered as saying to us, "*Hear what the unjust judge saith;*" consider well his inward reasoning just disclosed, and mark how he confesses himself to have been overcome by importunity. "*And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*"

The description here given of the people of God as "his own elect," or chosen, is too striking, and too full of doctrine to be passed over without some remarks. Be it known, then, for the confutation of gainsayers, for the overthrow of human pride, for the glory of God, and for the security of those who have been brought to trust in his mercy, that the Lord has a chosen people, a people who are the objects of his sovereign, eternal, electing love. They may be considered in either of two lights—as converted or unconverted. God's love of approbation and complacency only extends to them when they are actually pardoned, regenerated, and brought to love, resemble, and obey him; but his love of benevolence, or love of desire and intention to do them good, and to save them, was from everlasting, and regarded them as condemned, depraved, helpless, and in every sense

undeserving. "God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the Beloved."<sup>\*</sup> It is not said that he hath chosen them because they were holy; but it is said that he hath chosen them "that they should be holy." It is not said that God has purposed to save them, provided they obey the gospel call, but that he "hath saved them and called them according to his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began."<sup>†</sup> That this doctrine should be rejected by those who reject the other doctrines peculiar to the gospel, is only what must be expected; but, that it is rejected, or at least disliked, by some who are in most other respects evangelical, must arise, either from their having a mistaken and distorted view of it, or from their not being thoroughly humbled. As to the charges of partiality and cruelty, they are utterly futile. As to partiality, the objectors themselves must allow that God does bestow many favours on some, which he does not bestow on others; but this would be wrong too, if there be any thing wrong in election to eternal life, as the difference would be only in degree. And how can that doctrine be considered as uncharitable and cruel, which refers the whole to an infinitely wise, holy, and merciful God? On the other supposition, and were it not for the positive purpose of God, none would be saved at all: on the true supposition, the salvation of multitudes is secured, though others, for good reasons, are left to reap the fruits of their rebellion; and, therefore, this is by far the more pleasant and charitable doctrine of the two. There is, however, something peculiarly illogical and inconsistent in the views of those who are so far evangelical, as to hold man's inability and the freeness of God's grace, and yet who are not so thoroughly evangelical as to hold the doctrine of election also. They have already admitted that from which this doctrine may be most clearly demonstrated. For, observe, they disclaim the idea of salvation by works, and hold salvation to be of grace; and when the question is put in this form, whether a sinner saves himself, or God saves him, they readily say that it is God. If, then, they allow that God saves the

\* Eph. i. 4.

† 2 Tim. i. 9.

sinner, it is only necessary to ask whether he did not *intend* to save him. We ask any thinking person whether it would be a worthy idea of God, to suppose that he does anything which he did not before intend to do? Even a sensible human being has a plan on which he proceeds in every great work. Much more evident it is, that the Lord God has a plan, a design in his mind of what he executes: indeed, Scripture expressly declares that "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." If, then, it is God who saves the sinner, and not the sinner who saves himself, and if God intended to save him, that is all that we mean by the doctrine of election, or predestination to eternal life. Why, then, not be consistent? Why hesitate to adopt the whole truth, and to use, in its true and decided meaning, the scriptural language with regard to it? It is of great importance that this truth should be received; for, where it is truly and consistently held, all the other doctrines of the gospel follow of course; the soul is stripped of all self-confidence and reduced to its own place, which is the dust; God is exalted, and Christ becomes all and in all; the interests of faith and holiness are promoted, seeing it is always to be kept in view, that "God hath from the beginning chosen" his people "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;" instead of stumbling at the doctrine of sovereign grace, application is made to God on that principle; a most delightful representation is seen of that merciful Being who saith, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;" and, beyond all question, the whole scheme and progress of salvation, from first to last, are thus perceived to be calculated to prepare all the redeemed for that heaven where they shall cast their crowns before the throne of God, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

God's "own elect" are all called by his grace in due time; and it is, as called, that they are spoken of here. Though dear to their God, they are exposed to many troubles from without and from within; and we are here reminded that when labouring under trials, they are characterized by earnest and persevering prayer, they "cry day and night unto him." Witness the Psalmist, "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee; incline thine ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh



unto the grave." Though they cannot pray for revenge, they properly pray for redress, and protection against all enemies, in behalf of themselves and the Church. "Keep me as the apple of thine eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies who compass me about. Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down."—"O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just." Our Lord teaches that God will certainly avenge his own elect who thus cry to him; he will vindicate their cause, and deliver them from their enemies, whether temporal or spiritual. He will interpose, "though he bear long with them."\* This may refer, either to God's elect, or to their enemies: and we probably have the sense most complete when we include both. God is often long in answering these prayers of his people, and, of course, bears long with their oppressors. However, a delay is not a denial for his people. Delay serves to try their faith, to call them forth to greater earnestness, to give a higher relish to deliverance when it comes, and to afford an opportunity of a more glorious interposition in their behalf.

"*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*" That may be said to come speedily which comes as soon as it can come with propriety; especially if, at last, it come in a striking way, suddenly, and at a time when it was not expected. "The Lord will help" the righteous, "and that right early." And, as for the ungodly, "their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not:" they need not, therefore, promise themselves perpetual impunity, or set their hearts in them fully to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not always executed speedily or immediately. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

It is proper to remark that we must not, from any thing that is said in this parable, entertain the unworthy idea that God may be wearied by many words, and weakly led to do what is contrary to his will, or what he did not intend to do. The argument stands just thus:—If this wicked man was prevailed on by importunity, much more will the great

\* There are many opinions, and critical difficulties, connected with this clause, which the scholar may examine, but which it would be of little importance here to discuss.

God. Between the situation of petitioners at the throne of God's grace, and that of this widow applying to this judge, there is something of a resemblance, but there is much more of a contrast. This judge was unjust; but the Lord God is a just God, and a Saviour. This judge was unfeeling and cruel; but God is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. This judge was wearied and displeased with the widow's frequent applications; but God invites and loves importunity. This widow had no connexion with the judge; but those of whom we speak are God's own elect. She had no friend to plead for her; but they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, whom the Father heareth always. She, instead of encouragements and promises, had everything to damp her; but they have every encouragement, especially the express promise of a gracious answer at last. How obvious and undeniable, therefore, the delightful inference! Again, then, the conclusion is, that we should give ourselves to earnest and persevering prayer. Thus saith the Lord, "The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."\*

"Nevertheless," adds our Lord, in conclusion—notwithstanding all these warnings and exhortations, "*when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith† on the earth?*" His coming seems here to refer primarily to his providential coming, by the Roman army, at the destruction of Jerusalem; and he intimates that there would then be but little faith on the earth, or rather, on, or in, the land—that is, in the land of Judea. At the time referred to, the great majority of the Jews were in a state of total unbelief, while even most of the Christians were, probably, so disheartened as to have but little expectation of deliverance, and not a few false professors altogether apostatized. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, our Lord says, in reference to the same period, "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." This seems also to refer to Christ's personal coming at the day of judgment, of which his providential coming to overthrow Jerusalem was an emblem. Peter says "that there shall come, in the last days, scoffers,

\* See more on the subject of importunity in prayer, in Lecture lvii.

† *THE GOSPEL*. There seems no good reason for confining the sense, with Dr Campbell, in his Note in defence of the rendering, "this belief." The article does not necessarily so limit the sense, neither does the connection.

walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And as it is said, in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, that "when the thousand years" of great religious prosperity "are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations," it is thence inferred that there will be a great defection just before the general judgment. How many, too, in every age, are destitute of faith when they are called away by death!

When Christ comes in any way, he seeks for faith, and he is entitled to expect it, and should find it. Say if he would find it in you, were he now to come; or rather, say, simply, whether it be in you at this moment. "All men have not faith."—"Who hath believed our report?"—"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." If you have not that faith which interests in the Redeemer's merits, and leads to prayer and obedience, "he will come at an hour when you are not aware, and will cut you in sunder, and will appoint you your portion with unbelievers." Pray that it may be given to you in behalf of Christ to believe in his name. Seek the grace of faith; and when you have obtained it, hold it fast. "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."—"Watch and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."—"Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful who hath promised."—"Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now, the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Be not, therefore, "of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

## LECTURE XCIII.

LUKE XVIII. 9-14.

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

THIS parable of the Pharisee and the publican is another of the many admirable parables which are to be found only in Luke; and whereas the foregoing parable inculcated importunity in prayer, this explains the views, and spirit, and conduct, of those worshippers who pray aright, and who are justified, or pardoned and accepted of God.

Let us consider, in the First place, *The persons to whom this parable was addressed by our Lord, for their conviction*: —“*He spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*” Whether they had betrayed their sentiments by their way of speaking or not, he knew that such sentiments lurked in the breasts of some of his hearers, and he wisely adapted himself to this class of his audience. So ought every Christian teacher under him, to endeavour to accommodate his instructions to the different characters whom he has to address, and in thus rightly dividing the word of truth, particularly to set himself, from time to time, to expose the folly and danger of self-righteousness. Our Lord had frequently to deal with persons of this turn of mind. Thus, of the lawyer who “stood up and tempted him, saying, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” we read, “But he willing,” or desirous, “to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”\* The Pharisees betrayed the

\* Luke x. 29.

same spirit on various occasions. Jesus said unto them,\* "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men;" and the scriptural outline of the character of most of them shows that they entertained a high opinion of their spiritual excellence, and trusted in their own righteousness for acceptance with God. In connection with this overweening conceit of themselves, the persons to whom our Lord addressed this parable were characterized by a supercilious contempt for others; especially, it may be supposed, for those who did not, in every respect, hold the same opinions, and observe the same forms with themselves. Nor, however prevalent this spirit may have been then, is it unknown now: nay, it is very common; and self-righteousness is still usually accompanied by a feeling of fancied superiority to others. It is according to our fallen nature to cling to the covenant of works, and to be vain, proud, and supercilious; it is of grace that some are brought in truth, as well as in profession, to renounce all trust in themselves, and to become sincerely humble and charitable. We shall see how these points are illustrated in the progress of this parable, which must still be considered as fraught with instruction to us. Let us proceed to notice,

Secondly, *The persons who went up to the temple to pray*:—"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." The temple being situated on Mount Zion, those who repaired to it had, of course, to ascend or go up. It was erected for the express purpose of prayer, in connection with sacrifice. Solomon besought the Lord to hear the prayers which should be made, either in, or towards the temple; and the Lord accordingly engaged to hear them when properly offered; and he also said, by Isaiah,† concerning those who keep his Sabbath, and take hold of his covenant, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." The usual hours of prayer at the temple were the third and ninth, corresponding to our nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, when the morning and evening sacrifices were offered, along with the burning of incense. We read in the beginning of the 3d chapter of the Acts, that "Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." In the passage before us, we read

\* Luke xvi. 15.

† Isa. lvi. 7.

of two persons of very different character going up. It is still, we may remark, the duty of all to frequent the house of God, for the purpose of worshipping him through the one true "offering and sacrifice which Jesus offered of himself." We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but we are to be glad when they say unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is to be regretted that too many entirely neglect this duty, or are very remiss with regard to it; such persons at least must be wrong, whatever may be the case with others. But among those who do frequent the house of God, there is a great diversity of character. There is a great mixture in the visible Church. Some worship "in spirit and in truth;" others "draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, but their heart is far from him." The services of some, therefore, are accepted, and of others are rejected. The hollowness of hypocrites may escape human observation, but God's all-searching eye marks it well; and to all such he says, "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts?" We should be very jealous over ourselves in this matter; for it is to be feared that many who do enter, as well as those who contemptuously desert, God's temple below, will never enter into his temple above.

Of the two men who went up to the temple to pray, the one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. We have already repeatedly found mention of both these classes.\* The Pharisees, as the word implies, were a sect separated and distinguished from others by peculiarly strict rules of living. In many respects their doctrines were correct; and there were, doubtless, among them persons who came nearer than the most of the other classes of the Jews to scriptural opinions and practices. But our Lord charged them as a body with adding to, and making void, the law of God by their traditions, and denounced the generality of them as self-righteous and hypocritical. The publicans, again, were the tax-gatherers. Of these officers, the higher were often very honourable men; but the lower, who farmed from them particular taxes, were often, from a desire to make the most of them, unjust and oppressive in their demands; independently, however, of their mode of acting, their appointment under the foreign and galling yoke of the Roman government was, of itself, enough to render them

\* Luke v. 30, iii. 12, &c.

very obnoxious to the Jews; and thus the Jews, partly with reason, and partly from dislike, were accustomed to class the publicans with sinners, or scandalous transgressors. Such were the parties to which the two men respectively belonged.

Let us go on to consider, Thirdly, *the prayer of the Pharisee*:—"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself." He stood; and there was nothing wrong in the posture. The publican stood also. Standing, as well as kneeling, is a reverential posture. While Solomon\* prayed kneeling, at the dedication of the temple, the people stood, as they seem generally to have done.† The translation, as here given, conveys the idea that our Lord meant to intimate that the Pharisee prayed only mentally, to, or within himself, and it is possible that it may have been so; but the most natural interpretation of the passage, according to the exact order of the original, is this: "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed these things." This implies that he intentionally chose his station apart from others, and especially at as great a distance as possible from the publican, with whom he had entered the temple, but whom he despised, and by whose touch, or even near approach, he would have considered himself polluted. He may have chosen to stand by himself, also, from the desire of being observed by others. On this supposition he was influenced by the ostentatious spirit which our Lord condemns in these words: "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward;" that is, in being thus seen and applauded of men, they already have all the reward they are ever to receive.

The Pharisee prayed thus: "*God I thank thee.*" "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Our thanks are due to him for all the blessings of creation, providence, and redemption. We are to give "thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But there is a way of thanking God which is only a veil, and a very thin veil, for applauding one's self; and of this the Pharisee was evidently guilty on this occasion. "I thank thee," said he, "*that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.*" If God have

\* 1 Kings viii. 14, 54; 2 Chron. vi. 3, 13.

† See also Mark xi. 25; Ps. cxxiv. 1, cxxv. 2.

restrained men from presumptuous sins, and bestowed on them any true holiness, it is not only lawful for them, but incumbent on them, to be inwardly grateful; and there are seasons in which they may properly pour out their gratitude in words, even in the hearing of others. "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God," saith the Psalmist, "and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." At the same time, it is then very necessary to exercise much jealousy over one's spirit, and much caution in one's way of speaking, lest pride arise in the heart, and the language, however studiously chosen, tend to reflect honour on the creature rather than on the Creator. The Apostle Paul furnishes a beautiful example of this thankfulness and humility united. He speaks with glowing gratitude of his privileges; but always in such a way as to exalt his Lord, and to abase himself. Thus, "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief:" and again, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." In all these expressions, we perceive at once that the apostle contrasts what he had become in Christ with what he had been and still was in himself, and ascribes the whole of what was good in him to the praise of the glory of God's grace. But it is as plain that it is not so with this Pharisee. He says, it is true, "God, I thank thee;" but this is an unmeaning expression as to God, introduced as a plausible way of praising himself. If there could be any doubt of this, it would be removed by the vain-glorious manner in which he afterwards assumes religious precedence, and enumerates his boasted excellencies. He speaks of the bad character of others, not as he ought to have done, if he spoke of it at all, with unfeigned sorrow on their account, and humble gratitude on his own; but with a malevolent and ill-concealed triumph over them, and gladly availing himself of the foil to set off



his own fancied superiority. Besides, what though he was not so bad as some other men? did that prove his state to be good or safe? was that the proper way of judging? By no means. The law of God, and not the low ideas and vicious practices of men, was the rule; and if he had fairly tried himself by that, he would have found, we say, not less reason for self-gratulation, but the strongest reason for deep self-abasement. And then, what although he had not been actually and outwardly guilty of the scandalous sin of rapacity, or injustice, or impurity? that, though well in so far, was not conclusive in favour of his being a really good man; for he might have been chargeable with some other wilful and outward sin; or if he was unimpeachable externally, he might have been, nay, he certainly was, wicked at the heart, still in his natural, unrenowned, and unpardoned state, and even in a very great degree under the influence of some sins, such as hypocrisy and pride. He plainly trusted in himself that he was righteous; and that circumstance alone, if there had been any good in him, would have destroyed it all.

Not contented with preferring himself to others generally, this Pharisee had the audacity and uncharitableness to set himself above one individual, in a way that reflected severely on his character. "God, I thank thee," said he "that I am not as other men are," "*or even as this publican.*" It does not appear that he knew anything of the private character of this man; and, if he did not, it was quite inexcusable to conclude against him because of his employment, or rashly to impute to him scandalous sin, on any random supposition whatever; nay, though he had known him to be a worthless man, it would have been unfeeling, malevolent, and in every sense wrong, to have upbraided him and exulted over him in this way. He might be what he supposed him, or he might not; or he might once have been such, but might, by this time, have become a new man. The sentiment of the Pharisee, in short, was quite unbecoming and indefensible. Even though it had been correct as to the fact on which it rested, which there is sufficient reason to believe it was not, it was wrong in itself; nor could the supercilious man who indulged it have derived any advantage from the reality of that, with the groundless imagination of which he was so highly gratified.

When this way of speaking of freedom from sin is closely considered, it appears to amount to a denial, on the part of

the Pharisee, not merely of his being an exceedingly great sinner in comparison with others, but of his being a sinner at all, in any such sense, or to any such degree, as should occasion him any remorse or fear. What blindness was this! In the language of the Lord to Israel, by Jeremiah,\* "How canst thou say, I am not polluted?" "Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned."

Such were the nature and the futility of that negative goodness, on which the Pharisee rested one half of his plea with God: let us next advert to the positive goodness of which he boasts. "*I fast twice in the week.*" The only fast which was expressly enjoined in the law of Moses was that on the great day of expiation—the tenth day of the seventh month:† though we read of various fasts being observed on special emergencies. Many of the Jews, however, and the Pharisees especially, by their traditions and practices, which by use came to be considered as binding, added, in this respect, as well as others, to the law of God. Many of them fasted as often as twice in the week, namely, on the second and fifth days of the week, or Monday and Thursday. This was certainly "voluntary humility," and will-worship—service which God did not require, and which he would not accept at their hand. As the Pharisees were remarkable for the unbidden and unreasonable frequency, so were they for the hypocritical manner of the observance of their fasts. "When ye fast," said Jesus, "be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." This Pharisee not only fasted very often, but spoke of it; not only went beyond what was required by God's law, but boasted of it as an instance of uncommon sanctity. This was like Baalam who, after his wickedness in sacrificing with Balak, had the effrontery to speak of it with self-complacency to God when he met him, and to say, "I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram."‡ The Pharisee would not be satisfied till God was called on to take particular and approving notice of his fasting; like Israel of old,§ "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest

\* Jer. ii. 23, 35.

† Numb. xxiii. 4.

‡ Lev. xxiii. 27.

§ Isa. lviii. 3.

no knowledge?" But here, too, the Lord might justly have replied, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" "When ye fasted and mourned," "did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" How worthless must this Pharisee's fasting have been, which could thus minister the food of his pride, and the subject of his boasting!

But he has another point of positive goodness to vaunt of: "*I give tithes of all that I possess,*" or acquire. The Jews were positively enjoined, by the law of Moses, to pay for the maintenance of the priests and Levites, the tithe, or tenth part, of the corn and fruits of the land, and of their flocks and herds;\* and, in addition to this, the tithe of the remainder for the sacred festivals and charity. Without doubt, to withhold these tithes was sinful, and exposed to the divine displeasure; whereas, to pay them faithfully was an essential duty, to which was annexed the promise of a special providential blessing. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse! for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."† But the Pharisees refined on this precept, and made it to include the most trifling productions of the garden; in this case, as in many more, affecting a wonderful degree of strictness, which, in their practice, was associated with the neglect of the most important virtues. Christ did not blame them for their unnecessary scrupulosity; but he said,‡ "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Such seems to have been the character of the Pharisee in this parable, so that his care in the matter of tithes was not sufficient proof of his piety. He had a visible religion of ceremonies, without the vital religion of faith and holiness. In this way, it is possible that he might have been altogether blameless as to legal righteousness, while he was altogether guilty in the spiritual sense. Paul, in the days of his ignorance, was possessed of a righteousness of this kind, which, however, he utterly renounced, on

\* Lev. xxvii. 30; Deut. xiv. 22. † Mal. iii. 8, 9. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 23.

his undergoing that change without which he must have perished for ever. "I was," says he, "as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" — "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

In the midst of essential deficiencies, and great positive blemishes of character, and with a proud and unrenewed heart, this man not only entertained, but expressed, and that to God, the highest opinion of the excellency of his own religious state and conduct. The degree to which such vanity and self-commendation were sometimes carried by Pharisees is amazing. A learned commentator\* quotes, from a Jewish work, the following genuine specimen of Pharisaic pride, in one who was regarded, by the rest of his party, as an uncommonly good man. Rabbi Simeon, the son of Jochai, said: "The whole world is not worth thirty righteous persons, such as our father Abraham. If there were only thirty righteous in the world, I and my son should make two of them; and if there were but twenty, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but ten, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but five, I and my son would be of the five; and if there were but two, I and my son would be those two; and if there were but one, myself should be that one." Such arrogance is enough to provoke a smile. When spiritual pride is carried to such an excess as this, we at once perceive its folly and guilt, and are prepared to laugh it to scorn. But it is unbecoming and sinful in every degree. Whether, therefore, we be able to bear it at all in others, does it find no utterance in our own expressions? at least have we no toleration for it in our own breasts, in some less offensive form, or some lower degree? It will be well, if this extreme case prove useful in so attracting our attention, convincing our understanding, and impressing our conscience, as to warn us against all approaches to it.

We see, then, what was the nature of this Pharisee's prayer. It contained no confession of sin; nay, it was framed on the idea of his having no sin to confess. It contained no prayer for pardon; for he had no sense of guilt,

\* Dr Adam Clarke.

and no apprehension of danger. It contained no petition for grace of any kind; for he was not aware that he stood in need of any such thing. It was all thanksgiving, such thanksgiving as it was; but it was a mere pretence of thankfulness, to cover pride, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness in the sight of God, and a most uncharitable, contemptuous, and overbearing spirit towards his fellow-men. Surely he was one to whom our Lord's words would have been most applicable, as they are now applicable to every person who bears any resemblance to the character: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

We should next consider the prayer of the publican; but this, with the remainder of the subject, we shall attempt, if it please God, in another Lecture. In the meantime, may he bless for our edification what has now been said; and to his name be praise. Amen.

## LECTURE XCIV.

LUKE XVIII. 9-14.

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN  
CONCLUDED.

WE now proceed to consider,

Fourthly, *The prayer of the publican.*

There are several instances in which publicans, despised as they generally were, are spoken of in Scripture as acting better, and more readily yielding to the truth, than Pharisees and others who stood high in religious profession and reputation. We read of Levi, or Matthew, the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom, but leaving his lucrative employment, and following Christ, at his command. We read of Zaccheus, who was the chief of the publicans, and rich, seeking earnestly to see Jesus, and receiving him joyfully, and of Jesus saying, "This day is salvation come to this house."\* We read, how "all the people that heard John, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." We find, too, our Lord declaring to the chief priests and elders, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." So here, whatever may have been the character of this publican before (for we must speak of the case, which is here parabolically represented, as if it were a real history), we find him conducting himself in a very becoming way, and exhibiting the marks of a true penitent.

"*He stood afar off.*" The Pharisee pushed ambitiously forward to the upper end of the court of Israel, that he might be in the most conspicuous place, and as near as possible to the court of the priests, and the more sacred parts of the temple; but the publican took the lowest and

\* Luke xix. 1-10, 29; Matt. xxi. 31.

most distant part of that court, if he was in it at all, and not rather in the court of the Gentiles, though the circumstance of the Pharisee speaking of him as "*this* publican," seems to intimate that he was within his sight. The choice of a station which the publican made of itself indicated his humility.

"*He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven.*" Filled with the consciousness of guilt, and grieved at the heart, he did not look up; but, as pensive and distressed persons are wont, he stood with downcast mien, and with his eyes fixed on the ground. Thus the Psalmist prayed: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore, my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me." And Ezra: "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." And Daniel: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee."\*

"*He smote upon his breast.*" This action was a common and natural way of expressing extreme grief, or perturbation of any kind. It always denoted violent trouble within the breast; and in the case of repentance, seemed to signify that the person judged himself worthy of the heaviest punishment. Somewhat similar to the publican's was the case of Ephraim, as thus described: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely, after that I was turned I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Nahum represents persons in great distress as "tabering upon their breasts." Luke also relates, that all the people who came together to the sight of Christ's crucifixion, "beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."†

\* Ps. xl. 12; Ezra ix. 6; Dan. ix. 7.

† Jer. xxxi. 18; Nah. ii. 7; Luke xxiii. 48. *Στηθεας δε πλνξας,*

Many serious and deep thoughts of penitence, and of anxiety for deliverance, were doubtless filling the breast of the publican all the while he was thus standing dejected and in silence. Unable, however, to restrain his feelings longer, he uttered the brief but most comprehensive and energetic prayer, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" In these words, he made a frank and unrestrained confession of sin, acknowledging himself to be a sinner, in a strong sense of the word—one who was, by nature and practice, a sinner, one who had grievously offended. This, too, was such a confession as betokened deep inward contrition, and melting of soul—a conviction, not merely of the fact, but also of the evil and baseness, of the exceeding sinfulness of his sin. He felt like Job, when he said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?" "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth;" "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" and like David, when he said, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." There was here, too, an earnest supplication for mercy, in the persuasion that nothing but mercy, strictly so called, nothing but free, unmerited, sovereign mercy, would suit his case. And it is very instructive to remark, that the word that the publican uses implies an application for mercy on the ground of an atonement. The original word is not the same with that employed by the blind man in the 38th verse of this chapter, when, applying to Christ for the restoration of his sight, he says, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" but it is quite a different word, and is similar to the words rendered "to make satisfaction"—"a propitiation"—and "the mercy seat," which was sprinkled

πραδιν ἡνιπαρξ μυσθ— "Smiting on his breast, he chid his heart."—*Odys.* xx. 17.

"Pulsu vasto tundite pectus;  
Non sum solito contenta sono:  
Hectora flemus."——

"Beat your breast with a great stroke; I am not content with a common sound: we weep for Hector."—*Seneca, Troad. Chor.*

"Effusas laniata comas, concussaue pectus  
Verberibus crebris ———  
———Sic mæsta profatur."

"Tearing her dishevelled hair, and smiting her breast with frequent strokes—she thus speaks in grief."—*Lucan*, ii. 335.

"Motis ad pectora palmis."—*Silius Italicus*, lib. xii.



with the blood of the sacrifices.\* This is a prayer for pardoning mercy in God's appointed way of atonement. So the royal penitent prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions;" and then, in allusion to the dipping of the bunch of hyssop in the blood of the sacrifice and the water, for sprinkling, he adds, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Such was the prayer of the publican—an earnest cry for mercy through the shedding of blood, without which there is no remission. Let us, in the exposition of the parable, consider,

Fifthly, *The reception these two worshippers met with from God.*

Here we are not left to conjecture or to mere inference, for we have the express authority of the faithful and true witness. "*I tell you,*" says our Lord, "*this man,*" the latter man, the publican, "*went down to his house justified, rather than the other.*" The word "justified," is plainly to be here understood as implying that he was pardoned and accepted of God, as to his person generally, and, in connection with this, accepted in this act of worship in particular. When it is said that the publican was justified *rather than* the Pharisee, the meaning is, not that they were both justified, and that the one had a greater degree of justification than the other; for justification is a complete and perfect act, which does not admit of degrees: "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."—"He that believeth" "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Nor does this at all signify that the Pharisee might have been justified, for it signifies quite the reverse. In various places of Scripture, where one thing is said to be incumbent, or to exist, rather than another, the meaning is, not that the one is incumbent, or exists, to a certain degree, and the other to a greater degree; but absolutely, that the one should not be, or is not at all, and that the other should be, or is. Thus: "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour:" "Let not fornication be once named among you, but rather giving of

\* Not *ἱλῆσεν με*, but *ἱλασθητι μοι*. ἱλαω, ἱλασκειμαι, propitius sum. "Maxime convenit illi placationi et reconciliationi, quæ fit inter Deum et hominem, offerendo sacrificium, seu hostiam ad obtinendam peccati remissionem. Ita sæpius usurpatur a lxx. in Levitico."—*Stockius*. Rom. iii. 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, *ἱλασθηριον*, through faith in his blood." Heb. ii. 17: "To make reconciliation, *εἰς το ἱλασθαι*, for the sins of the people:" and ix. 5: "The mercy-seat, *ἱλαστήριον*."

thanks:" "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."\* The form of expression before us, though not exactly the same as in these passages, is similar. As to the Pharisee, the meaning clearly is, that he was not justified; he was not pardoned, and his prayer was not accepted. How was any thing of the kind possible? How could he expect any blessing, when he would not condescend to ask one? He was foolishly satisfied with what he was already. His false confidence towards God, and his uncharitable and contemptuous spirit towards men, would have utterly spoiled much greater virtues than those to which his vanity laid claim. He was one of those to whom the alarming words of Jehovah, by Isaiah,† apply: "They who say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." His self-righteousness, or desire to justify himself, prevented the possibility of his obtaining the true righteousness, or justification by grace. He was exactly in the guilty and unhappy situation of those of whom the apostle thus writes, in the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th chapter to the Romans: "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." The Pharisee left the temple, and went down to his house in a state of condemnation, and even under increased guilt.

As to the publican, the meaning of this expression, at the very lowest, must be that he was in a more likely way to obtain justification than the other. But this would not be nearly up to the truth. The way in which this expression is used in other places, and the circumstances of this particular case, fully warrant the conclusion, that the publican was actually justified as to his person, and also accepted in his worship. In him we see the great characteristics of the penitent believer. Here, as already observed, we see unrestrained confession following on deep conviction: but

\* Eph. iv. 28, v. 4, 11; Heb. xi. 25.

† Isa. lxxv. 5.

we know that if men confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. Here, too, we see a most earnest application for mercy through the appointed channel of a propitiatory sacrifice. Many men, it is true, would have despised the lowly demeanour and downcast look of the publican; but, thus saith the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We have, therefore, every reason to believe that his spiritual state was like that of the paralytic,\* who, when Jesus said to him, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee, immediately rose up and took up his couch, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." As the publican left the temple, and returned home, he would feel as if he heard the Lord saying to him, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

The rejection of the one worshipper, and the acceptance of the other, are both declared to have been according to that rule of divine judgment which we met with before,† "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."—"He filleth the hungry with good things, and sendeth the rich empty away." As for pride, it "goeth before a fall." Those who attempt to exalt themselves to a high place in spiritual excellence, and in God's favour, on the ground of their own righteousness, shall be cast down to their true place of worthlessness, and be rejected here; and, so continuing, shall be cast down into everlasting ruin hereafter: whereas, those who are humbled under a sense of their unworthiness and guilt, shall, through the grace of God, and the merits of the Redeemer, be raised to a state of pardon and spiritual life on earth, and, at last, to eternal glory in heaven.

Lastly. *Let me attempt a direct and pointed application of the parable to your consciences, in the way of caution and of exhortation.*

First, Let me *caution* you against resembling the Pharisee. And here, let none of you feel as if you would say, "I thank God that I am not as this Pharisee:" let none of you think or speak thus, in any such sense as would justify yourselves before God; for, if you do, you will thereby resem-

\* Luke v. 20.

† Luke xiv. 11.

ble the Pharisee, without being aware of it, and lose the benefit of cautions which you imagine do not apply to you, but which are, notwithstanding, very appropriate to your case.

Be cautioned, then, against resembling the Pharisee in *self-righteousness, or trusting in yourselves that you are righteous*. That many flatter themselves with an unfounded idea of their own goodness, is quite certain. Though some may be disposed to question it, it is a fact, confirmed by the observation of those who are accustomed to deal with the consciences of others, that this error, in one shape or another, is clung to by many with the utmost pertinacity, and is often the very last thing in which they are undeceived, before they thoroughly surrender themselves to God's pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace. The spirit of self-righteousness often continues to lurk in the heart, and sometimes betrays itself in unguarded, yet natural expressions, long after its theory is professedly abandoned, and even protested against. Sometimes, the error shows itself in too gross a form to mislead persons of any penetration. Most frequently, however, it is, in a considerable degree, varnished; the subtle poison, for example, instilling itself under the deceitful form of a high regard to holiness and morality. Allowing, perhaps, the general truth, that salvation is for Christ's sake, and by grace, some, at the same time, hold other sentiments which contradict, or neutralize, that allowance. They do not, for instance, distinguish properly between justification and sanctification: hence, they do not perceive that while the gospel method of salvation includes and secures holiness as consequent on the reception of pardon and of a new heart, it of necessity excludes that holiness from being considered, in whole or in part, as either the meritorious or instrumental cause of acceptance with God, and refers the whole merit to the Redeemer, who is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; which faith is not a meritorious principle, originating in man, but the gift of God. You should be fully aware that the reign of a self-righteous spirit is fatal to the soul. It is, in fact, a rejection of Christ. Those who are under it, will not receive Christ as he is offered freely and fully. They choose to be treated, to a certain extent at least, as they deserve. This is a very delusive state, as they do not suspect they are wrong, or in danger, but flatter themselves that they are very good people, and that all is well with them. Is there any such person here? any whom mistaken views of his own real desert, of

his own exceeding sinfulness, and a very imperfect idea of the riches of redeeming love, have hitherto prevented from embracing the humbling, yet delightful, doctrines of salvation? To him we would address the words of Jehovah: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Thou knowest not thyself, else thou couldst not trust in thyself. Pray God to make thee acquainted with thine own heart; and then thou wilt feel that thou hast nothing of thine own to boast of, or trust in, but, on the contrary, every thing to deplore; and thus thou wilt be taught the necessity of seeking a justifying righteousness in another way. Adopt the language and feelings of Job,\* "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say I am perfect, that shall also prove me perverse."—"If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Again, we caution you against resembling the Pharisee in *despising others*. Beware of contemning others in action, word, look, or thought. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In the words of the wise man,† "He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour;" and, "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth." In the words of Paul: "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.‡" Art thou superior to thy neighbour? do not insult over him, or seek to keep him down, or to make a figure at his expense; but try to bring him up, and improve him. Dost thou see imperfections in him? seek their correction, and help him forward in the good way. Nay, if thou have certain evidence of his worthlessness, still pity him and pray for him, if nothing more be in thy power. Be severe to thine own faults, and candid to those of others; and remember that condescension and charity are essential features of true Christianity.

\* Job ix. 20.

† Prov. xi. 12, xiv. 21.

‡ Rom. xiv. 10.

Farther, Beware of resembling the Pharisee in resting satisfied with any, or all, of *the three pleas* he brought forward, as certain evidence of true religion. These pleas were, that he was not so bad as other men, that he was free from gross sins, and that he observed some of the external precepts of religion. There are, indeed, too many who cannot say so much as this; for they are eminently wicked among the wicked, slaves to vice, and regardless of religious ordinances: surely, all such persons, at least, should feel condemned, and seek pardon and conversion. But the pleas of the Pharisee are just those which are most commonly urged, to the present day, by decent formalists. How common is it to hear people saying that they are not so bad as others, and thereby flattering themselves that they are safe! It is the favourite plea of at least one half of those who are ignorant of the demands of God's law. But do not you delude yourselves with the thought. Consider well the language of the apostle to the Corinthians,\* "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." You may not be so bad as some other men, and yet you may be in a state of sin. But do you say, with truth, that you are free from gross sin? This is well, and yet it is not decisive in your favour, for it is possible that you may be like "whited sepulchres." You may still be inwardly averse from good, and inclined to evil, and still under the curse of the law: and thus, "except you be born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Unless you get the sentence of condemnation, which is already passed on you, reversed, and undergo a radical change of heart, from the love of sin and the world, to the love of holiness and of God, you never can be acceptable worshippers of God on earth, or be entitled, or prepared, to enter into heaven. But you can, perhaps, also say that you are observant of ordinances and self-denying duties, and give away much of your substance. All this is well as to the letter; but it is still necessary to inquire into the spirit which animates you. It is possible to come up to the temple, and to leave your hearts behind. It is possible to fast for strife and debate, and in pride. It is possible to give all your goods to the poor, and your body to be burned, and yet to be destitute of charity. It is possible for you to

\* 2 Cor. x. 12.

have all these and many more things to say in your favour, and yet to trust in them, and attempt to make a merit of them, and thus to turn them all into insults to the Divine Majesty. You must have the plea of Christ's righteousness to rest on; you must really rely on that righteousness by faith; and you must have the power, as well as the form, of godliness; for, while true godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, bodily exercise profiteth little.

Be cautioned, too, against the Pharisee's *defective way of praying*. It is chiefly among persons of very high religious profession, but confined views, and little real feeling, that this error is found. Like the Pharisee, they pray as if they were almost the exclusive favourites of heaven, and as if they would condemn others in a body. They not only address the Lord God irreverently, and introduce their own case in an unbecoming way, but intentionally exclude many scriptural topics from their devotions; and they proceed on the principle, and even sometimes defend the principle, that almost the only thing a believer has to do in prayer is to give thanks. Now, however important and delightful a part of the duty thanksgiving is, it is by no means the whole of the duty. Other parts of it are confession of sin, petition for pardon, and sanctifying grace for ourselves, and intercession for others: and those who intentionally, or in habitual negligence, omit any of these, whatever be their pretensions to a high pitch of confidence in God, betray Pharisaical hypocrisy and irreverence. To omit these is practically to forget the radical meaning of the word, prayer, which is, asking, or petitioning. See, then, that you take the enlarged, scriptural view of this exercise; and remember, in particular, that if you would receive, you must ask, and that your grateful thanks for what God has already done for you, and your earnest requests for what you still need, should go hand in hand. "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."\*

Once more here, Beware of at any time *speaking or thinking of your own attainments, in such a way as would be self-commendation, or vanity*. Granting that your religious attainments are solid, and even great, they furnish

\* Phil. iv. 6.

no ground for personal elation; for, to whom are you indebted for them, but to God? Let none be puffed up; "for who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Do not, like the Pharisee, after thanking and praising God, proceed to thank and praise yourselves. Do not, after ascribing what you think good in you to God, proceed to fix on it as if it were then your own, independently on God. Do not think of making God your debtor for what he himself has bestowed on you. It is not enough to use the language of thanksgiving at one time, if, at another, you fall into the opposite strain of vaunting. It is not enough to give glory to God, if you next "sacrifice to your own net, and burn incense to your own drag." Begin in humility, and end in humility. Do not speak, or think, as if you were free, or almost free of sin, or as if you acted up, or almost acted up, to the rule of positive duty. Such is not your actual attainment. But, though you were absolutely perfect, your divine Master would still address you thus: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Even though you are the Lord's servants, you cannot stand before him in your own merit. How edifying the words of the Psalmist, and of the apostle: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."—"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"—"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."—"Let no flesh, therefore, glory in his presence;" but, "according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Secondly, Let there be an application of this parable to your consciences, in the way of *exhortation*. Be exhorted to imitate the publican—imitate him by adopting the spirit which led him to *stand afar off*. Be deeply impressed with a sense of the distance there is between you, as weak and sinful creatures, and the Almighty and Holy Lord God. Be fully aware that he might justly punish you with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power. This feeling, instead of being incompatible with the duty of evangelically drawing nigh to God, is inseparably connected with it; just as the publican, notwithstand-



ing the remote station which his humility led him to select, was much nearer to God, in respect of mental approach and acceptance, than the Pharisee, who ambitiously pushed forward as far as possible. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." Imitate the publican, if not in the outward action itself, at least in that genuine *contrition for sin*, which made him smite on his breast. Hear, for your own benefit, how Paul describes the nature and working of this contrition, in writing to the Corinthians: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For, behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves clear in this matter." Imitate the publican in *confessing* your sinfulness. Acknowledge yourselves to be great sinners, "sinners exceedingly" before God. Say, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away." Imitate the publican, also, in his *cry for mercy*. Brief, indeed, but most comprehensive, definite, and expressive in itself, and most suitable to every one of you, is the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Put up this prayer, not vaguely, in the idea of God's general mercy, but in the light of the gospel, and with a particular reference to the merits of Jesus Christ, whom God "hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Following this method, despairing of deliverance in any other way, and earnestly suing for mercy in the way of reliance on the one true atonement, you shall be accepted; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;"—"God will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities he will remember no more."

Finally, To all of you who have come up to the temple to pray, at this time, it only remains that we should put the question, now that you are about to go down to your own houses, *Are you to go home justified, or not?* Hail, happy souls, who are already in a justified state! Who shall lay any thing to your charge? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" There being no condemnation to

you, see that ye walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Let dying love and pardoning mercy constrain you to obedience. Continue contrite and submissive, and hold fast the beginning of your confidence stedfast unto the end. Thus, while you increase in fruitful branches upwards, you shall strike root deeper and deeper downwards in humility. And, should any of you, with your last breath, be only able to say again, "God be merciful to me a sinner," you shall be heard, you shall find mercy of the Lord in that day, and shall be exalted to glory, and honour, and immortality.

Are there any of you who are to be contented to go down to your houses unjustified? Then you are to go with the wrath of God abiding on you. But, what if you should never be able to come up to the temple to pray again? Would it not be the safer, the only safe way, to make sure of carrying away the blessing of justification with you now? In order to this, it is necessary for you to understand the nature, and to comply with the method, of justification as stated in Scripture. The substance of its information on this subject may be thus condensed: Justification in the sight of God is pardon of sin, and full acceptance; it comes in this life, and it brings with it a title to eternal life, which can never be lost. Its moving cause is the free grace of God; its meritorious cause is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and its instrumental cause is faith: "being justified freely," says the apostle, "by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." The Lord is now saying to you, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." A complete justifying righteousness is provided for your immediate acceptance. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Receive him, and you receive all. Then, though you may have come hither under the curse, you shall depart under the blessing; though you may have come to this house in a state of condemnation, you shall go down to your own houses justified, each of you being dismissed, by the Saviour, with the gracious words, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

## LECTURE XCV.

LUKE XVIII. 15-17.

“And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them : but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God. 17. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”

THERE are to be seen beautifully harmonizing in the person, character, and actions of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apparently opposite, but perfectly consistent and most engaging, qualities of majesty and gentleness, dignity and condescension. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; and yet he is the Lamb of God. He is in the form of God, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God; yet, “he made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” He is “the Prince of the kings of the earth;” “he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords;” and yet, he was the lowliest of the lowly. He is the fellow of Jehovah; yet he condescended to hold familiar intercourse with men, and to notice babes and children. He whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose voice is as the sound of many waters, and whose countenance is as the sun when he shineth in his strength, smiled kindly, and pronounced blessings on the little ones of Judea. This is one of the most touching and most pleasing actions which are recorded, even of the Redeemer. Many a time has it been told, as soon as they were in any degree capable of understanding it, to children in subsequent ages of the Church; and many of them has it won to the love of the Saviour, of whom some have been spared for years to serve him on earth, and others have been early taken home to his arms, to enjoy all the blessedness of his visible presence. While we now meditate on the record of this beautiful action, may

the Comforter, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ, and show them to his people, cause us all who are present, whether young, or old, or middle-aged, to feel its softening, winning, and sanctifying efficacy.

We find an account of this transaction in Matthew 19th chapter, from the 13th verse; and in Mark 10th chapter, from the 13th verse. The turning points in our Lord's progress to and from Jerusalem, are not so distinctly marked as to be universally agreed on by commentators: it is the common opinion, however, that, a short time before this, he made one journey up to Jerusalem, to attend the feast of tabernacles, and another soon after, to attend the feast of the dedication of the temple. Having been up at this latter feast, he turned again into Galilee. A glance at the 19th chapter of Matthew shows that the event before us took place when Christ had "departed from Galilee, and come into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan." "Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came tempting him," on the subject of divorce. "Then," or at that time, "were there brought unto him little children."

There were brought unto him "little children," according to the words just quoted from Matthew; in the parallel passage of Mark, "young children," according to our version: the Greek word, however, is the same in both these evangelists. "*And they brought unto him also infants,*" says Luke, employing a different word, in the Greek, from that of Matthew and Mark. Both these Greek words, however, are used to denote both infants, strictly so called, or children who are lately born, or so young that they cannot speak, and also children who are much more advanced. Indeed, both the words are used in this passage of Luke; so that, corresponding to these two words in the original, those who are called "infants" in the first verse, are called "little children" in the next verse, the words being, in fact, here employed as synonymous. We are to suppose, then, that there were now brought to Christ children of different ages, of whom some were so young as to be unable to walk, and were, therefore, borne in their mothers' or nurses' arms; and some who were led by the hand, or conducted, and who were capable of understanding and remembering the solemn transaction.\*

\* Matthew and Mark use the word *παιδια*; Luke uses both *βρεφν* and *παιδια*: The word *παιδιον* is used for a new-born infant in Matthew ii. 8,

These infants, or children, were brought to Jesus "*that he would touch them;*" or, as more explicitly in Matthew, "that he should put his hands on them, and pray." The act of the imposition, or solemn laying on of hands, appears, in its strongest meaning, to have been a sign of dedicating or setting apart persons to God, and of imparting to them spiritual gifts. It was used of old at the ordination of priests, as it is still at that of ministers. It was used in prophetic and authoritative blessings; and, no doubt, also in cases where the benediction was merely an earnest prayer for a blessing. Thus, when Jacob blessed his two grandsons, under the influence of divine inspiration, he laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, and his left on Manasseh's.\* Somewhat similar was the act of lifting up the hand, or hands, in blessing; thus, "Aaron lifted up his hand towards the people;" and thus, Christ, at his ascension, "lifted up his hands, and blessed" his disciples.† The parents and friends of these children, in bringing them to Jesus, testified a regard for him themselves, and intimated, at the least, their expectation that his prayers and his blessing would cause their children to thrive as to health and outward things, and especially, promote their spiritual and eternal welfare; for, whatever may have been the imperfection of their views, they considered him as a prophet.

It might have been thought, that a movement which showed so much respect in the people, and promised so much good for their children, and which was so very honourable to the Redeemer, would have filled the disciples with delight, and have met with every encouragement on their part. So defective, however, were their ideas of Christ's condescension and kindness, that, when they saw what the people were doing, "*they rebuked them,*"—they signified, with some sharpness, their disapprobation of their conduct, and their wish that they should desist. Perhaps they thought that the people were using too great a liberty with him, that their applications would be teasing and unpleasant to him, and that it was foolish to expect that infants, or children, could derive any benefit from being brought to him. This

9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21; Luke ii. 17, 21; John xvi. 21: for a child somewhat advanced in Matthew xviii. 2, 3, 4, 5; Mark ix. 24: and for a girl twelve years of age, in Mark v. 39, 40, 41, 42. The word *βεβήκος* is used for a new-born child in Luke ii. 12, 16; Acts vii. 19; 1 Peter ii. 2: and for a child so far advanced as to be capable of knowing something of Scripture, in 2 Timothy iii. 15.

\* Gen. xlviii. 14.

† Lev. ix. 22; Luke xxiv. 50.

was certainly inconsiderate and unkind. Somewhat in the same way, as we read towards the end of this chapter, the multitude rebuked the blind man for crying to Jesus, and desired him to hold his peace. In like manner, those who are coming, in the spiritual sense, to Christ themselves, or endeavouring to bring others to him, may generally expect opposition, and *that* not only from persons who are altogether worldly, but sometimes even from Christians, who are influenced, at the time, by a mistaken and excessive caution; but let them not be discouraged—He whom they seek after has his eye on them all the time, and those who come to him he will in no wise cast out. It is implied, in the sequel of the history, as given by Luke, but it is expressly stated by Mark, that “when Jesus saw it”—when he observed the interference of his disciples—“he was much displeased.” The Lord is displeased even with his own, when they speak or act in an undutiful manner. When Peter presumed to rebuke and oppose Jesus on his intimating how he was to be put to death, he “rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” And when James and John proposed to call down fire from heaven to destroy the inhabitants of a village who would not receive Christ, “he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” If, then, we do really love him, let us study to avoid whatever would offend him, and to “keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

Jesus had much more condescension and kindness than his disciples had, and than they supposed him to have; and he said to them, as “*he called*” the children unto him, “*Suffer little children,*” or, the little children, for this is a particular case, universally applicable in its principle, “*suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.*” Let us consider what is implied in this doctrinal declaration, which is here introduced as the reason why children should be brought, or come, unto Christ.

It implies, First, That *children, even mere babes, may be regenerated, and truly holy.* “The kingdom of God,” as usual, here signifies, being the subjects of true religion, or the prevalence of the gospel on earth, and that as a preparation for eternal happiness above. Now, regeneration is absolutely necessary in order to this. “Except a man be

born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But if the kingdom of God consist, in part at least, of little children, then they must be capable of being born again, in the true spiritual sense of the phrase. With regard to adults who are still in an unrenewed state, the way in which the Holy Spirit renews them is through the knowledge and belief of the truth; they are "born again of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." But the Divine Spirit is not limited to this mode of operation; and as children cannot enter into the kingdom of God without this change, so we have particular examples of some who passed through it in infancy and childhood. Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy, may be considered as instances of this. The thing is plainly possible, nay, frequently happens, and should be the object of prayer. This consideration is very important and pleasing, as it shows how they may be saved, though they die before they are capable of personally believing the gospel.

This declaration implies, Secondly, *That infants may become members of the visible Church.* If the greater blessing of regeneration and actual salvation may become, and often does become theirs, that of itself is a strong reason why they should receive the less blessing of the outward sign of Church membership. The little children of the Jews were considered as in covenant with God, of old. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God," said Moses,\* "your little ones, and your wives," "that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God." Their male children were circumcised when they were eight days old, and Paul† declares that the sign of circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith" which Abraham already had—that is, it was a seal of the covenant of grace; but, as it is not a matter of dispute, but of certain fact, that it was administered to infants, this forms one of the strongest arguments in favour of infant baptism, and one of the readiest answers to objectors on the pretence that the administration of baptism to infants is absurd and useless, because they cannot understand it. Indeed, the very same objection might have been urged against the solemn action here recorded, for, these infants could not understand it any more than infants can now understand baptism; therefore, the objection must be groundless. Should it be said that no mention is made of these infants being baptized

\* Deut. xxix. 10.

† Rom. iv. 11.

when they were brought to Christ, the reply is obvious, that Christian baptism was not yet instituted. Repentance and faith were afterwards required, in order to baptism, of all who were grown up to be capable of them; but their children were baptized as well as themselves. Peter said,\* “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise is unto you, and to your children.” And Paul thus writes to the Corinthians: “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”†

This declaration implies, Thirdly, That *children are very early capable of receiving benefit from religious instruction.* With the exception of absolute infancy, religious and moral culture can hardly be begun too soon, if it be judiciously adapted to the opening faculties of children. They are capable of comprehending very early the great truths of the Gospel, and should be led on to the knowledge of them with great care. In fact, very young children are, in some respects, the most promising subjects of religious instruction. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Those that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little.”‡ Little children, though by nature inwardly depraved, are not yet hardened and made worse by long confirmed habits of actual transgression. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may they also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” The earlier, therefore, attempts are made to bring children to Christ, the better.

This declaration implies, Fourthly, That *the true Church on earth actually consists, in a great measure, of those who have been called in early life, or at least have been very early instructed in the way of salvation.* It is true, and it is a reason of much thankfulness, that many have been converted to God in advanced life, whose early years were sinful and neglected. Nor is our present remark overthrown by the fact that all who are well brought up do not turn well out. We do not mean to say that the desirable result is obtained without exception. But, as a general rule, scriptural examples (without entering into particular cases), and com-

\* Acts ii. 38.

† 1 Cor. vii. 14.

‡ Isa. xxviii. 9.



mon observation, unite in proving that the Church is chiefly filled up and adorned by those who have been, either very early under the influence of religion, or from the first dawning of reason, under spiritual culture. Surely, this fact furnishes a very strong reason why Christ's injunction should be attended to, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not"—nay, a very strong reason why, instead of interfering against their coming to him, every pains should be taken to bring them.

In connection with this, the declaration may be considered as implying that *the kingdom of God above consists, in a good degree, of those who have died in infancy and childhood*. It is wisely ordered that Scripture contains very little positive information on this, or indeed, on any other subject, which is not necessarily connected with our own safety and holiness; yet, these words of the Saviour naturally suggest the pleasing sentiment just expressed. Though, as descended from the first Adam, all are naturally guilty and depraved, there is reason to believe that infants, especially the infants of believing parents who die in infancy, strictly so called, and before they are capable of sinning actually after the similitude of Adam's transgression, are among the elect of God, and accepted and saved through the second Adam. With regard to those children who, having lived till they have become capable of conscious religious impression, have been brought to know, trust, love, and obey the Saviour, however heavy the bereavement occasioned by their death may be in itself, yet their Christian parents, instead of sorrowing as those who have no hope, may have this consoling assurance, that they have gone to be for ever with the Lord. Let believing parents, who have been bereaved of their infants, or pious children, think of this, that their hearts may no more be sunk, and their countenances no more be sad. Let them imitate the Shunammite, who, on the death of her son, being asked, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" answered, "It is well."\* "Why was there a voice heard in Rama, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not?" And why, ye Christian parents, were ye above measure cast down when your dear little ones were laid in the dust? They are taken away from the evil to come; they are saved from much sin and sorrow; they have gained the

\* 2 Kings iv. 26.

prize, without the danger of a defeat. The Lord hath hid them in the grave: there he keeps them in secret, until his wrath be past. He hath appointed them a set time, and will remember them.

We might show, once more here, how this declaration of our Lord's implies *that there is a certain child-like disposition in all his true disciples*; but we need not stop to point out how this truth may be inferred from this declaration, when we have it expressly taught in what follows: "*Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.*" Similar to this was the declaration Jesus made on a previous occasion,\* when, calling a little child unto him, and setting him in the midst of the disciples, he said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And why is it that little children are thus held up as models, which grown up persons must resemble, before they can receive and enter into the kingdom of God—that is, actually submit to the gospel here, as a preparation for glory hereafter? It is not because children were born in a state of innocence, and have continued free from sin, so that, if they were to die in the same state in which they were born, they would go to heaven; for they were "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," and are "by nature the children of wrath:" but it is because they generally are, though not absolutely, yet comparatively, humble, and teachable, and free from worldly desires. If grown up persons would enter into the kingdom of God by receiving the gospel, they must do it as little children, in respect of *humility and teachableness*. It is generally very difficult to get adults to submit to have their understandings informed, and their consciences searched. Often when they are plainly very ignorant, and very careless, they shun all attempts to enlighten and impress them, as if they knew enough, and were good enough already. They are too proud to learn, and are suspicious of the designs of those who would be glad to be of use to them. But this is not so much the case with little children. They do, indeed, sometimes manifest pride and obstinacy; but, generally speaking, it is not so. The difference between them and their parents and teachers, in point of knowledge, is so great, that they cannot but be sensible of it; and, for the most part, they are conscious of their inferiority; and

\* Matt. xviii. 3.

reason, even without special saving grace, is sufficient to make them willing, and even desirous, to be taught. They are of an unsuspecting and confiding spirit; and they believe what they are told, till they find themselves deceived. It is to this submissive teachableness that our Lord chiefly refers. "Whosoever, therefore," says he (in the words following those already quoted from Matthew), "shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Pride fortifies the mind against Gospel instruction; humility welcomes it, and obtains it. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Those who would be brought under the kingdom or reign of God, must also resemble little children in their *comparative freedom from worldly desires*. There are other obstacles to the success of the gospel, besides the pride of intellect; among these may be noticed worldly ambition, and many evil passions. Doubtless, the seeds of all these evils are in the youngest heart; but they have not there attained to any vigorous growth. Young children feel but little, in comparison with men, of that desire for worldly preferment and wealth, and of that malice, which prove so great obstacles to the reception of the spiritual truths of the Gospel. "How can ye believe," asks our Lord, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" "Brethren," says Paul to the Corinthians, "be not children in understanding: howbeit, in malice be ye children; but in understanding be men." You see, then, how these child-like dispositions are necessary to entering into the kingdom of God.

Thus far does Luke give us the history of this occurrence; but, in order to have the circumstances of it complete, we must take in what is added by Mark, in the 16th verse of his 10th chapter: "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." We have already noticed the use and import of the action of Christ's solemnly laying his hands on the children. What condescension and affection are manifested in the action of his taking them up in his arms! How manifestly is he, in this, seen to be the mighty and gracious Redeemer, of whom Isaiah said,\* "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and

\* Isa. xl. 11.

shall gently lead those that are with young!" We are not told what words our Lord employed when he blessed the little children, nor even whether he blessed them orally or mentally. It is most natural, however, to suppose that he did utter a short benedictory prayer. And when it is considered that "him the Father heareth always," it must appear certain that this prayer, in particular, was heard; nay, this was more than a prayer, it was an authoritative pronouncing of happiness, it was an actual communication of blessings. According to the full import in which it was intended by its divine and gracious pronouncer, so would it follow them through life, and into eternity. Surely, this was an action worthy of him who came into the world, and lived and died, for the very purpose of promoting the happiness of our kind—worthy of him of whom it is said, "Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

Besides conferring a blessing at the time, this most interesting action was admirably calculated in itself, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, deeply and permanently to attach, and ever after to keep steady to the faith, love, and obedience of Christ, those children who were the objects of it, whether they were so far advanced at the time as to be able to observe it so as to remember it, or whether afterwards they only knew it by being told of it by their parents and friends. Of this the celebrated Ignatius was a remarkable instance, if the account given by Nicephorus Callistus be worthy of credit, though that historian seems to refer to the case in which Christ took a child and set him in the midst of his disciples, rather than to that immediately under consideration; the circumstances, however, were in so far similar. Nicephorus says, that when Ignatius was of tender age, Christ lifted him up and exhibited him to his disciples, pointing out and commending his simplicity and sincerity, and telling them that unless they became like him, they would never reach the kingdom which he then preached.\* Ignatius was a native of Syria, and was instructed by the apostle John. He afterwards became bishop or pastor of the Church at Antioch. After a zealous and successful ministry, which he exercised faithfully, in defiance of threatenings and persecutions, rather than deny

\* Nicephorus, *Eccl. Hist.*, lib. ii. c. 35. Doddridge, however, is of opinion that Nicephorus refers to the event which is the subject of this lecture.

that Saviour who had taken him up in his arms in his childhood, he, in his advanced age, submitted to be torn to pieces by two lions in the theatre at Rome, by the order of the emperor Trajan, in the year of our Lord 107. The Epistles of Ignatius are very interesting ecclesiastical remains, on various accounts; but they are chiefly valuable as proving the antiquity and genuineness of the Holy Scriptures, which he often quotes in the same words in which they exist at the present day.

Let this fine portion of sacred history be improved, *First, by parents, ministers, and teachers.* Let *parents* be here instructed and encouraged to bring their infant children to Jesus Christ, by committing them to his providential care, by yielding them to his disposal, by supplicating for them his regenerating grace, and by dedicating them to him in hearty and entire mental surrender, in fervent prayer, and in the ordinance of baptism. Let them, too, as soon as their children are in any measure capable of understanding, set themselves judiciously, affectionately, and perseveringly, to the great work of instrumentally instilling into their minds, and impressing on their hearts, the principles of the Gospel; and let them bring them to Christ, by bringing them to the house of God, and habituating them, in early life, to regular attendance in the place where Christ is preached, and where his blessing may be especially expected. In all their endeavours to bring their children savingly to Christ, let them look to God for the fulfilment of his promise, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Let them make no delay in these endeavours to instruct and impress their children, but let them proceed just as soon as possible, remembering that if their children have lived to be capable of knowing good and evil, they cannot be safe, but are in danger of perishing every moment, till they are brought to Christ, in some light, and trust, and love, according to the measure of their capacity. Let them remember that such children may be suddenly cut off, and thus all opportunity of instructing them be gone for ever. Forthwith, then, let them do all they can to lead them to the Saviour—to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Thus, if they are taken from them in childhood, they will have strong consolation in their death; or, if they are spared with them, they may generally expect to see the success of their parental endeavours, in their good character and conduct. "Train

up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

*Ministers* also should improve this history; for they have here the example of the chief Shepherd admonishing them to love and instruct little children. He still says to them, as he did to Peter, not only "Feed my sheep," but also, "Feed my lambs."

*Teachers*, too, have here a beautiful example of how they should conduct themselves towards their tender charge. Let them manifest the condescending and affectionate spirit and demeanour of this Teacher sent from God, remembering that whatever effect compulsion may have in forwarding their progress in other branches of education, it is not possible to compel them to open their hearts, but that, if they are to be won to Christ, it must be by gentle and affectionate means. The same demeanour, in this respect, is necessary in parents, ministers, and teachers; so that the rules which the apostle lays down for one of these classes, are applicable to all the three: they should be "gentle, apt to teach, patient, and instructing in meekness." The following words of Paul to the Thessalonians are an exact description of what teachers should be in the midst of their juvenile care; and, were they always such, the spiritual good they would do would be incalculable: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."\*

*Secondly*, Let this passage be improved by *children*; that is, by those children who are so far advanced as to be able to understand. Dear children, you have probably been often told before, and you are now told again, that when you were infants you were brought to Christ by your parents, when they gave you to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in baptism. Think of this, and consider how you are thereby bound to serve the Lord. You have just heard, too, what, notwithstanding original sin, all children, in comparison of proud and obstinate people who are grown up, are supposed to be, and what you ought to be—humble and teachable; see, then, that you really be so. Now that you are capable of it, come to Christ yourselves; that is, learn to know him, to believe in him, to love him, and to obey him. Would you not like to have seen these Jewish children all

\* 1 Thess. ii. 7.

brought to Christ, some of them carried by their parents, and others led by the hand? and would you not like to have seen him taking the youngest of them into his arms, and laying his hands on all of them, and blessing them? Must not that have been a beautiful sight? and, if you had been there, would you not have not only desired to see them get his blessing, but to get his blessing yourselves? I hope you would. But let me assure you that you may get his blessing still; for though, as man, he is gone to heaven, so that you cannot see him, yet he is both God and man, and as God he is everywhere present, and therefore, he is here still; and he is as kind as ever he was, and as ready to bless you as he was to bless the children in Judea. We not only suffer you, then, we not only do not forbid you, but we invite and beseech you thus to come to Jesus, and apply for his blessing. Follow the example of Timothy, who "from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Seek his blessing in this manner, and seek it without delay, and you will certainly obtain it. "I love them that love me," says he, "and they that seek me early shall find me."

*Lastly,* Let this passage be improved *by all other persons of every age*. It is to be lamented, my friends, that many grown up persons are by no means like little children in humility and teachableness; but it is absolutely necessary that you be so, in order to salvation. If you have nothing of this spirit, begin to seek it now. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths." Apply to him for instruction from his Word, and by his Spirit, and he will teach you to profit. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." If you already have something of this child-like disposition, cultivate it more and more. Let every one of you, whatever be your character, now endeavour to be able to say with the Psalmist,\* "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." Let every one of you, also, attend to the exhortation of the apostle

\* Ps. cxxxi.

Peter,\* which is here most appropriate: "Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby."

Surely, if you have never yet come to Christ so as to obtain an interest in the solid happiness which he bestows, the view which this part of his history presents of his kindness and condescension may well encourage you to come at last to him, humbly yet confidently, for his blessing. Be persuaded to draw near to him in this manner, and you will find that whatever obstacles may be thrown in your way, he will not frown you away from him, but will beckon you to come, and will welcome you to his mercy and salvation. And, surely, if you have already come to him, and obtained his blessing, the view of him here given may well endear him more and more to your affections, and bind you more and more to his service. If he has taken you, so to speak, into the arms of his mercy, seek not to break away from him, but rest contented and happy there. If, in this spiritual and most important sense, he has laid his hands on you and blessed you, "let no man take your crown; never let go or forget the amazing honour he has conferred on you, but, holding it fast, and ever remembering it, as the sure pledge of his never-ending love to you, and the strongest bond of your enduring fidelity to him, say, each of you, "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy."

\* 1 Pet. ii. 1.



## LECTURE XCVI.

LUKE XVIII. 18-27.

“And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22. Now, when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. 23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich. 24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

WE find substantially the same history in the 19th chapter of Matthew from the 16th verse, and in the 10th chapter of Mark from the 17th verse; and both these evangelists, as well as Luke, introduce it immediately after the account of Christ’s blessing little children. That event took place “in the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan.” Matthew says that when Jesus had “laid his hands on them he departed thence. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master,” and so on. Mark says that this happened when Jesus “was gone forth into the way.”

The passage before us, in Luke, opens thus: “*And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” The person who now came to Christ was “a ruler;” this may signify that he was a ruler in a synagogue, or a civil magistrate, or merely, that he was a chief person in respect of station and wealth; it is, indeed, expressly said that he was very rich. Though it is true that the souls of the lowest are unspeakably valuable, that with God there is no respect of persons, and that some attach undue weight to the circumstance of men of note adopting or rejecting particular opinions—like the Pharisees,

who seem to have thought it enough to prove our Lord an impostor, for them to say, "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?"—yet society is so constituted, that the conversion of persons who, being distinguished for birth, wealth, power, or talents, attract more than ordinary observation, and, in various ways, have it much in their power to influence others, is justly considered as very important, not only in itself, but in respect of its probable consequences to many. Every promising case, therefore, of inquiry, on the part of such a person, excites much interest in those observers of it who are already under the influence of religion themselves; and it always occasions them deep regret to find, in any such case, their expectations disappointed.

It is quite necessary to observe and remember that Matthew\* says that the person who now came to Jesus was a "young man." If he was indeed an ecclesiastical or civil ruler, at so early an age, it is to be supposed that his promotion was owing not merely to his wealth, but also to his attainments and respectability of character. Regularity of life, diligence, and prudence, are favourable to a young man's success in the world, even when truly spiritual qualifications are wanting. "The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph."† Jeroboam, however, notwithstanding all his valour and industry, and still greater subsequent success, sinned greatly against the Lord, and made Israel to sin, and "returned not from his evil way."

With regard to this young ruler, there are various circumstances mentioned in the first part of the account, which appear very promising, and which, were it not for the sequel, might lead to the supposition that he "was not far from the kingdom of God." Mark mentions that he came "running." This betokened an eager desire to meet with Christ, and to consult him, before he left that part of the country, and was like the conduct of Zaccheus, when, desirous to see Jesus, "he ran before," and chose a situation in which he might make sure of his object. Let us cultivate, but follow out more consistently, the eagerness which the ruler thus manifested; let us betake ourselves with all speed to the Saviour; let us "make haste and delay not to keep his commandments." Mark also states that this ruler "kneeled"

\* Matt. xix. 20, 22. *Νεανίσκος*.

† 1 Kings xi. 28.

to Jesus. It appears, from what follows, that he was not aware that Christ was worthy of being kneeled to as an expression of divine worship; but his kneeling was certainly a mark of courtesy, esteem, and reverence, and even of some humility. It is worthy of notice, too, that he did not seek a private interview with Jesus, but courageously ran and kneeled down to him on the highway, as neither ashamed nor afraid to go to him. This also looked well. So let us, with more decision ultimately, however, not be ashamed of Christ, or of his words, but come forward openly as his disciples, and confess him before men.

Luke, as well as the other two evangelists, mentions that the young ruler addressed Jesus by the title of "Good Master." The word master here signifies teacher; and Jesus Christ was a good teacher, whether we take the word good as signifying general excellence, or the particular qualification of kindness. He was a perfect, unerring teacher. He was a teacher "come from God." It was a true testimony which the chief priests and the scribes bore to him, though with a treacherous intention,\* "Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly."—"The people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." With all his knowledge and authority, he was unrivalled for condescension and kindness in his manner of teaching; and, in the very act of teaching, he conferred on his disciples the most substantial blessings, and the most heartfelt happiness. "Learn of me," said he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." When he preached the gospel in the synagogue of Nazareth, his hearers "bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." He was well addressed, then, by the ruler. "Ye call me Master and Lord," said he, "and ye say well; for so I am." Let it not be forgotten, however, that he also says, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Let us apply to him as our teacher, with reverence, humility, and a determination to follow his instructions; and he will teach us to profit.

Nor was it a trifling subject on which the kneeling ruler proceeded to consult our Lord: it was the most important of all subjects—the subject of "eternal life." This proved

\* Luke xx. 21.

that he was a believer in the realities of another world, and not like the infidel "Sadducees, who said that there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit." This also manifested a desire for future happiness, and some personal concern about salvation. Neither, were it not for the way in which this young man afterwards betrays his real character, is there any thing in the particular form of expression, "What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?" which would necessarily convey an unfavourable idea of him. His meaning might have been nothing different from that of those who, under deep conviction, on the day of Pentecost, exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" or from that of Saul of Tarsus, when, "trembling and astonished, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or from that of the jailer at Philippi, when he "fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This might have been merely a general inquiry as to the way of acceptance, and the rule of duty; in which sense it would have been a very wise inquiry. It is well when people begin to be earnest, and to inquire at all in this affair. There is hope of inquirers that they may obtain the light of life. But it is clear, from the result of this ruler's inquiry, that he made it in a worldly, self-righteous, and self-willed spirit. He pretended that eternal life was the great object of his desire, but he soon showed that the world had the chief place in his heart: he gave out that he only wished to know what he should do, in order actually to do it, but, when he was put to the test, he disobeyed: he laid such a stress on what he himself should do, as intimated his persuasion that his own doings would go far to procure, if, indeed, they were not all that was necessary to procure, salvation; he imagined that he had done wonders already, in the way of obedience—had done all that he knew to be incumbent on him; and he signified that he was not aware of any thing else he could do, but that, if there was any one other splendid act of virtue he could perform, he would thank Jesus to let him know, and would certainly perform it. "What shall I do"—according to Matthew, "What good thing shall I do"—"to inherit eternal life?" It requires but a slight acquaintance with the law of God, the character of man, and the revealed way of salvation, to perceive the folly and the guilt of such a spirit. It is not enough that we begin to feel some concern, or even be very deeply concerned, about salvation, and make earnest inquiries about how we may obtain it; we must be

careful that our inquiries take a right direction, and be pursued in humility, and in accordance with at least the strong scriptural outlines of our own natural condition, and God's method of acceptance: for if they are not conducted in this way, they must either leave us a prey to unalloyed anxiety, or terminate in a false peace.

Our Lord, who "knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," was perfectly aware of the character of the young man he had now to deal with, and addressed himself to it with infinite skill accordingly. He began with adverting to the manner in which he had been accosted by him, calling on him to consider whether he had employed so honourable a title with any clear light, or just meaning: "*Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*" It can never be inferred from this that our Lord meant to object to the appellation of "Good Master," as more honourable than he deserved; for we have already seen that it is exactly descriptive of him, and it may be added, that he who took to himself the title of "The Good Shepherd," would not refuse from another the title of "Good Teacher." Nor can it be inferred from his saying that "there is none good but one, that is, God," that he meant to say that he himself was not God, that is, to deny the doctrine of his own divinity. It is an important truth, that whether goodness be put for universal excellence or for graciousness, none is essentially, absolutely, and perfectly good, but God only. "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee; neither is there any rock like our God."—"Thou art good, and doest good."—"God is love." In him all goodness exists, and from him all goodness is derived. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But no doctrine of Scripture is to be held, in any sense, which would overthrow any other doctrine of Scripture; and therefore this truth, that there is none good but God only, must be interpreted, wherever it is found, consistently with the other truth taught in such passages as these: "The Word was God"—"All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"—"I and my Father are one"—"Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just;" that is, this truth should be interpreted consistently with the Godhead of the Son. We must understand our Lord, then, as accommodating himself to the imperfect views of the young ruler, and asking how he could

come to him kneeling, and address him as absolutely "good," when he was ignorant of his divinity, and regarded him only as a mere man, though a prophet. Let us learn from this, not to ascribe in any way that honour to the creature which is due only to the eternal God; and let us at the same time learn to call Christ "good," in the full light of his perfect character and divine nature, as "God manifest in the flesh."

Our Lord then proceeds to answer the ruler's question, and, in doing so, begins with saying, according to Luke, "*Thou knowest the commandments;*" and more fully according to Matthew, "If thou wilt enter," or, if thou wishest, or art resolved, to enter "into life, keep the commandments." He who would expect salvation on the ground of mercy through the merits of the Redeemer, must show by an obedient life that he is resting on that ground, and remember that good works are the result of good principles. Such, however, was not the hope of this ruler, and therefore Christ's reply to him must be considered as bearing chiefly, though perhaps not exclusively, on the doctrine that he who would obtain salvation by his own doings, must keep the commandments of God *perfectly*. The rule on this scheme is, "This do, and thou shalt live."—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them."—"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Christ having said, that if the ruler would enter into life by his doings, he must keep the commandments, the ruler, desirous exactly to understand his meaning, and to ascertain whether he did not refer to some particular commandments on the observance of which salvation more especially depended, said to Jesus, according to Matthew, "Which?" that is, What commandments must I keep? To this Christ replied, as in Luke, "*Thou knowest the commandments;*" intimating that such a person as the ruler could not be ignorant of the duties to which he referred, as he alluded to the commandments of the moral law, given through Moses, on Mount Sinai. Our Lord then specifies some of these commandments, thus: "*Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.*" You will readily perceive that any attempt to explain and enforce these commandments separately, would be altogether out of place here, and that all

that is now necessary or proper for us to do, is to consider them together, and in reference to the particular purpose for which this enumeration of them is introduced. It is obvious, then, but important to remark, that though Christ might have quoted both tables of the law, he confined himself to the second. We find, too, from Matthew, that he concluded with a summary of these duties, in the admirable precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is called, by the apostle James, "The royal law;" and Paul,\* after a very similar enumeration, adds, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Though we are not expressly told what was the reason which induced Christ thus to limit his selection from the moral law, it has been often and justly remarked, that this was the most certain and exact way to meet the case of the ruler, inasmuch as he seems to have especially rested his hope of salvation on his attention to the duties of the second table of the law, which are summed up in love or benevolence to man, and yet, when put to the test, failed egregiously in that very respect. Being almost immediately convicted, by actual disobedience, of great deficiency in what he thought constituted his strongest claim on the divine favour, nothing but complete blindness and delusion could afterwards allow him to trust in his general character for eternal life.

How preposterous the declaration of the young ruler in reference to the commandments which our Lord enumerated! He said, "*All these have I kept from my youth up.*" The word "youth," as well as that in the original† for which it is used, is somewhat indefinite, and must here stand for early youth, or childhood, as this ruler was yet but "a young man." It is agreeable to the whole circumstances of his case to suppose, as well as implied in his own assertion, that whatever radical defects might be discovered in his state and character on a close inspection, his outward demeanour had always been steady, decent, and moral. This was, unquestionably, so far well; but he surely betrayed gross ignorance of himself, and of the extent of the law, when, occupied with the great question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he could say that he had so kept all these commandments, or any one of them, as to form, in

\* Rom. xiii. 9.

† ὅσα νόμους.

any degree, a ground of his acceptance with God. In particular, he must have entirely overlooked the spirituality of the law, as including the desires of the heart, and the perfection of the law, as requiring obedience commensurate with that perfection. Had he considered these points aright, instead of saying, "All these commandments have I kept from my childhood," he would have said, "Alas! all these commandments have I broken; and every imagination of the thoughts of my heart has been evil from my youth." To this conviction every true convert is brought, by a just comparison of his character with the rule of his duty. "I was alive without the law once," says the apostle Paul; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Here, let us take in that remarkable declaration in the beginning of the 21st verse of the 10th chapter of Mark; "Then Jesus beholding," or looking intently on "him, loved him." There is something very noticeable and affecting in the idea that Christ loved this youth, who was in an unregenerated state, and went away disobedient. But what was the nature of the love he bore towards him? It could not be that love of approbation and complacency with which he loves his reconciled and renewed people, for the object before him was not such as to call that forth. Nor, though it is possible that it was so, have we any ground for supposing that it was that special love of benevolence which he bears, even before their conversion, to those who are given to him of the Father to be saved, and shall, in due time, be called by his grace. But this love seems to have been a satisfaction in some things in the ruler's character, mixed with a tender regret that others, of much more importance, were not as they should be. He had various natural recommendations, which were truly agreeable and pleasing. For example, he was a youth, and, no doubt, of engaging appearance; he was a person of high rank and ample fortune; he was of good morals, and courteous carriage; and he was not a little concerned about salvation. Yet he was in a perishing condition. In all this, there was much to call forth natural human love and pity. To adopt the words of an excellent commentator:\* "There was a natural amiableness in this young ruler, compared with the base conduct of the scribes, Pharisees, and many others, which excited our Lord's compassion; and, as he was like

\* Scott.



us in all things, sin excepted, we may suppose that he felt that tender regard for him which pious ministers do for some in their congregations, who appear amiable, moral, and benevolent, but whom they do not consider at present as truly religious."

Having affirmed that he had kept all the commandments which Christ had enumerated, the young ruler added, according to Matthew, "What lack I yet?" This question might have been the result of a conscience still requiring something more to pacify it; it was rather that of a vain self-conceit, however, laying a train for the applause of perfection. But as Jesus began, so he carried on his plan, in the wisest manner for the exposure of the young man's pride and self-deception. He knew all the windings of his heart, and his besetting sin; and without directly contradicting him, took the most effectual method of stopping his vain boasting. "*Now, when Jesus heard these things,*" that is, heard him boasting in this manner, and putting this question, "*he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing.*" By this declaration our Lord did not mean to say that there was only one thing which the ruler lacked, for he had already betrayed his deficiency in several respects: but, however many more there might be, Christ fixed on one, which was important and decisive, namely, that of his paramount attachment to the things of this world; and, without expressly charging him with this sin, he brought it clearly to light, by proposing to him the following trial, in the form of a command which it was necessary for him to comply with, if he would be saved: "*Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.*" In the peculiar circumstances of the Church at the time, this command was to be understood, and should have been obeyed by the ruler, in its literal sense. He had come to Christ as a teacher, to learn of him what he should do to inherit eternal life; and now, as Jesus had done in many cases before, in which his command was immediately obeyed (as we shall find more particularly, if it please God, in the next lecture), he calls on him to forsake the world, dispose of his property, and join him as one of his constant followers. Had he done this in the literal sense, and also followed him in the figurative sense, by renouncing all confidence in himself, embracing the gospel, or way of salvation by grace, and imitating Christ's example, and obeying his precepts; rich as he was, the loss of all his

wealth would have been far more than compensated in spiritual and heavenly treasures.

But alas for the result! "*When he heard this, he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich;*" or, as it is in Matthew, "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Being tried in the quarter of his besetting sin, his boasted virtue proved radically defective. His riches were dearer to him than were the poor, and Christ, and eternal life; and he clave to the world, to the rejection of the gospel. He went away "sorrowful," however—he could not leave Christ, and yield to sin, without a painful struggle; but still, he did go away; and we have no evidence that he ever returned.

And so it is that many, who promise well for a time, and proceed some length in the inquiry after the way of salvation, fall away when it comes to the turning point. A sharp trial discovers the hollowness of some men's morality, as well as the unsoundness of their principles. Self-denial and nonconformity to the world, are as disagreeable to them as the doctrines of grace. They have some favourite idol with which they cannot part, even for eternal life; and were that idol wrenched from them, they would feel impoverished and miserable, and like Micah, when he said, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" The idolatry of covetousness, which was the great cause of this ruler's destruction, proves equally fatal to many. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," said Paul. So also, many go away sorrowful. They are by no means easy in their departure from what is right; but still they do depart. They condemn themselves for what they do; and yet, they resolutely do it. Such a contradiction is human nature—such a riddle is man! Herod was "exceeding sorry" for what he was to do; but he sent an executioner to behead John the Baptist in prison. Pilate openly declared that he "found no fault" in Jesus, and "sought to release him," and "took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person;" and yet, willing to content the people, he gave sentence that it "should be as they required;" and "when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." Yes, many live in sin, and are miserable in the midst of it, yet deliberately live in it still. Many regret that they are neglecting their salvation, and yet wilfully neglect it still. Many have a long struggle

between their convictions and their corruptions, and yet yield to their corruptions at last. Many are uncomfortable because they are not decided in their religion, and yet continue undecided still. Many go away from Christ sorrowful, and yet their sorrow is not godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, but the sorrow of the world which worketh death. Truly, in this respect, as in many others, "the way of transgressors is hard." Happy are they at the time, and happy shall they be for ever, who are enabled to break loose from all such entanglements, and, with hearty decision, to make up their minds to follow Christ.

In immediate connection with this occurrence, and with an obvious reference to it, it is added, in the 24th verse, "*And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said*"—that is, as appears from the other evangelists, when he saw the young ruler depart sorrowful, he said to his disciples—"*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*" Riches do, certainly, throw many great difficulties in the way of the salvation of those who are possessed of them. For example, the mere spending of them, if they are spent, too often hurtfully occupies and distracts the mind—the mere hoarding of them, if they are hoarded, always contracts and hardens the heart; they furnish opportunity and temptation to luxury and sinful indulgence of every kind; they surround a man with flatterers, and discourage the near approach and free dealing of those who might be of use to him; they tend to make him contented here, and to seek his rest and his portion in this life; they add many charms to the already too enticing world; they induce a very weighty responsibility; they often become a man's chief delight, and his trust, and his god, or the object of his idolatry; and they tend to elate him with pride and self-sufficiency, which prevent him from feeling his need of any thing else for his happiness. "The rich man's wealth," says Solomon,\* "is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." Thus, riches tend to fortify their possessors against the gospel; and thus, in fact, but few very rich men have ever heartily embraced it. Surely this is not sufficiently considered, else riches would not be so generally and so eagerly desired.†

\* Prov. xviii. 11.

† Plato (lib. v. De Legibus) says that it is very rare for men to be at once prosperous and good—*εὐδαίμονας καὶ ἀγαθούς*; and that to be very rich and yet good, especially eminently good, is impossible. *Πλουσίους*

So many and so great are the obstacles which riches oppose to men's salvation, that our Lord says: "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*" There can be no propriety, in explaining this language, to have recourse either to the alleged fact that there was a narrow gate in Jerusalem, called "The needle's eye," or, to the alteration of a letter in the Greek word,\* by which, instead of "a camel," we should have "a cable:" for, taking the saying just as it is, this, or something very similar, was a common, and though a strong, a very intelligible, proverb with the Jews. Of this, the following examples are given: "A camel in Media dances in a kabe," or measure holding three pints. "No man sees a palm-tree of gold, nor an elephant passing through the eye of a needle." One rabbi answered another who had advanced an absurdity, "Perhaps thou art one of the Pambidithians, who can make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle;" "that is," says the commentator, "who speak things impossible." The exact proverb before us is found in the Koran;† perhaps borrowed, however, from the Gospel.

When the disciples heard this saying, "they were amazed," "they were astonished out of measure,"‡ and said, "*Who then can be saved?*" Knowing that, while some actually possessed riches, most men at least eagerly desired to possess them, and aware how closely men's hearts cleave to the world, they were ready almost to despair of any being saved. Our Lord had, indeed, subjoined an important qualification to his doctrine, as appears from Mark x. 24: "Children, how hard is it for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" intimating that he referred not so much to the mere possession of riches, as to trusting in them. It is to be observed, too, that, however strong and unqualified the language of the foregoing proverb may be, it is not intended to express an absolute impossibility in every way, but a very great difficulty, and a high degree of improbability; it is, in fact, like this comparison, in Jeremiah,§ "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

δ' αὐ σφοδρα καὶ ἀγαθούς ἀδυνατοῦν.—Αγαθὸν δ' ὅσα διαφερωντῶς, καὶ πλουσίον εἶναι διαφερωντῶς, ἀδυνατοῦν.

\* Καμηλον, a camel; καμιλον, a cable. See Lightfoot, Dr Adam Clarke, &c.

† Koran vii. 37.

‡ Matthew and Mark.

§ Jer. xiii. 23.

And yet it must be confessed that both the possession of riches, and trust in riches, oppose such obstacles to salvation as are absolutely insuperable, except by the special and extraordinary power of divine grace; the reply, therefore, which our Lord made to the almost despairing question, or exclamation, of his disciples, must ever be regarded as most important and consolatory: "*The things which are impossible with men are possible with God*;" or, as in Matthew, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Whatever does not imply, at the time, an absolute contradiction in itself, or inconsistency with perfect holiness and wisdom, may be accomplished by God: the exclusion of what does imply anything of that kind from the range of his possible works, plainly argues, not the imperfection, but the absolute perfection, of his nature. Jehovah himself says, "I am the Almighty God." "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Job said, "I know that thou canst do every thing." Jeremiah "prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth, by thy great power and stretched-out arm; and there is nothing too hard for thee." And the angel said to Mary, "With God nothing shall be impossible."\* As to the application of this truth to the case in hand;—the salvation of the rich, as well as the poor, depends on the mighty power of God. It is by that power that faith is wrought in men at first; and it is by the same power that they are afterwards kept through faith unto salvation. By divine grace, accordingly, some who are possessed of great wealth are preserved from its snares; and even some who trust in their riches are brought to trust in the living God, and are saved, not in, but from their worldliness.

In looking back on the contents of this passage, let it be observed, very briefly,—

1. That we have here another *warning against self-righteousness, and boasting, or thinking highly of our own deeds*. Never let us say, never let us imagine, that we have kept all or any of God's commandments perfectly, or so as to furnish us with a ground of hope; but let us feel and confess our manifold sins, plead guilty before God, cast ourselves on his free mercy by faith in the great atonement, and implore his regenerating and sanctifying grace.

2. We are here instructed in *the sin and danger of an*

\* Gen. xvii. 1, xviii. 14; Job xlii. 2; Jer. xxxii. 17; Luke i. 37.

*undue attachment to the things of this world.* This ruler had many sins, but this was his besetting sin, this was the chief cause of his not profiting by Christ's teaching, of his disobeying his command, and of his leaving him altogether. So, it will be in vain for us to come unto God as his people come, and to sit before him as his people, and with our mouth to show much love, if our hearts go after their covetousness. Let us remember that "no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Though we are not called on literally to sell all our property to give to the poor, or to give up the business of life, we are called on to be liberal, according to our ability, nay, to renounce all, and to give up all to God, in the spirit of our minds, and to live above the world, while we are in it. If we allow the world to obtain the chief place in our affections, it will certainly draw us away from Christ, and incapacitate us for the love of God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," says John. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It is true, that none are free from danger in this respect, not even the poorest; but, in this view, this passage should be felt as peculiarly instructive to the rich, and to all who, according to their station, are prospering as to this world's goods. Let such persons beware lest "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and they become unfruitful."—"When riches increase, set not thine heart upon them."—"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

3. This history is most directly full of *instruction to young men.* Let it awaken to a sense of their danger those young men whose character is not even so good as that of this young ruler, who are not like him in sobriety and good outward conduct. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "Young men exhort to be sober-minded," says the apostle Paul. Let this example also

awaken those young men who are thus sober and decent, but who are not truly converted to God. Let them learn, from this young ruler's omission, to feel, and confess, and implore pardon for the offences of their early years, saying, with the Psalmist, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." Let all young men see to it, that they be able each to say with Obadiah,\* "I fear the Lord from my youth;" and with David, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth."—"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments." But, however directly applicable to young men, this history is also applicable and very instructive,

4. *To all persons of both sexes, and of every age, who, like this ruler, are steady, courteous, and engaging, but who are not real Christians.* Remember that you may be all this, and yet in a state of condemnation, with the wrath of God abiding on you. You may be possessed of every earthly advantage, and yet you may lack one thing, and that may be "the one thing needful." You may have all the attractions of youth, or the most commanding mien of mature age; you may have a fine bodily appearance, and a powerful mind, and a sweet temper, and a sympathizing heart, and polished manners, and even some religious knowledge, and some concern about salvation, so that you may be great favourites, and much flattered and praised by many: and yet you may be still estranged from God, who may be looking on you with a very different eye from that with which you are regarded by your admirers, and who may be, as it were, saying of you, as he said to Samuel of Eliab,† "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for, man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." All these engaging circumstances are very well; but you must be possessed of more substantial qualifications if you are to get to heaven. You must follow Christ. You must become possessed of the graces of faith and holiness. "You must be born again;" for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

\* 1 Kings xviii. 12.

† 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

Lastly. *It would be well if the followers of Christ would always, like this ruler, conduct themselves in a becoming, civil, and engaging way.* It would be of importance if they would always behave as well as many men of the world. Surely it is to be regretted if there be any who are, on the whole, truly humble and pious towards God, but supercilious, rude, fretful, passionate, and morose towards their fellow-creatures; and who thus, very unnecessarily and hurtfully, expose religion in the eyes of the world. Let all who know and love the truth, and are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, attend to the apostolic precept, "Be courteous;" and let them study to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, that others, instead of being repelled, may be won by their conversation. This will be, not only to learn wisdom from the children of this generation, but to resemble some of the finest examples of believers in Scripture. Nay, this will be to resemble the Saviour himself, who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man;" who was, and is, "the chiefest among ten thousand," "and altogether lovely;" and to whom his admiring people are accustomed to say, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore, God hath blessed thee for ever." "Finally, therefore, brethren, whatsoever things are honest," that is, venerable or respectable, "whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."



## LECTURE XCVII.

## LUKE XVIII. 28-34.

"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. 31. ¶ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. 34. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

PETER was distinguished among the apostles for readiness, boldness, and sometimes even rashness of speech. He spoke affectionately, but unadvisedly, when he said, on the mount of transfiguration, "It is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles." He spoke well, when, in reply to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He spoke well, too, when, in answer to the inquiry, "Will ye also go away?" he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Had it been in an humble spirit, and acted up to, it was a noble declaration which he made, when he led the way for the rest of the disciples, saying, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." And so, though it is possible he may have spoken with some degree of improper self-complacency, which, however, does not appear, and which the favourable reception of what he said by Christ renders improbable, he spoke according to truth, when, for himself and the other apostles, he now said to his Lord, "*Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.*"

This is introduced, not only by Luke, but also by the two preceding evangelists,\* immediately after the account

\* Matthew xix. 27; Mark x. 28.

of the young ruler who came to Christ inquiring how he might obtain eternal life, but who, on being directed to sell all that he had and follow him, went away sorrowful, for he was very rich: which conduct drew from our Lord certain remarks on the obstacles thrown in the way of salvation by riches. In this connection, and with an obvious reference, by way of contrast to the conduct of the ruler, Peter said, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." There is, doubtless, here an allusion to the precise circumstances in which several of the apostles were called by Christ. Thus, Peter himself and his brother Andrew were pursuing their occupation as fishermen, when Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men;" "and they straightway left their nets and followed him." James and John, too, were "in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and Jesus called them, and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." In like manner, Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, "Follow me. And he arose and followed him." And so the rest of them renounced their worldly prospects, and followed him in the way of constantly waiting on his ministry; and, with one exception, they all followed him in the way of becoming his believing and obedient disciples. It may, indeed, be said that it was but a poor all they left; still, however, it was their all. He who has but little to leave, sacrifices much by leaving that little, especially when he has the prospect of nothing but penury and hardship in its place. Their calling, such as it was, was their livelihood; and their parents, and other relations and friends, were just as dear to their hearts, as are those of the wealthiest and noblest to theirs. If, in leaving their business, and following Christ, they had had the view of coming to worldly preferment, riches, power, and honour, the step they took would not have been at all remarkable; but it was surely a great sacrifice, humanly speaking, to leave a competency and quietness, for deprivations, labour, poverty, disgrace, sorrow, pain, and death.

According to Matthew, Peter added, "What shall we have therefore?" that is, What reward shall we have for forsaking all, and following thee? None can claim or expect anything at the hand of God, as a reward of debt or merit, in the strict sense of the word; for the best are but unprofitable servants. But this humbling consideration is quite consistent with the encouraging truth that God will

bestow a reward of grace, or will graciously bless those who are brought to faith and holiness; and it is according to the congruity of things that he should connect true happiness with those graces of which he himself is the author. In this there is nothing to elate the creature, but everything to exalt the Creator. "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous," says the Psalmist; and, though every believer is influenced chiefly by gratitude for what he has already received, yet, like Moses, he has also "respect to the recompense of reward." We are to consider Peter, then, in this question, not as negotiating a self-righteous bargain, but as inquiring into the promises made to the people of God; for it is unquestionable that there are "given unto them exceeding great and precious promises," and that all these promises in Jesus Christ are "yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God the Father."

When we look farther to the parallel passage in Matt. xix. 28, we find this part of our Lord's reply to Peter, and through him to all the apostles, which is not given by Luke: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The meaning to be affixed, in this saying, to the word "regeneration," depends on whether it be immediately connected with what goes before it, or with what follows it. If we connect it with the words which precede it, it will refer to something which was then past, and will signify that personal saving change of which our Lord speaks in the 3d chapter of John, as the only way of entering into the kingdom of God; and thus it will have the same meaning here as in Titus iii. 5, which is the only other passage of Scripture in which the very same word is used, though there are several scriptural expressions of the same import: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." In this view, our Lord would be considered as asserting that those who had so followed him as to be born again, should obtain the gracious reward afterwards specified; and, no doubt, that is an important truth. But a different idea is conveyed when, according to what the generality of interpreters seem justly to consider more natural, the words, "in the regeneration," are immediately connected with the subsequent clause. In this connection (passing over some

fanciful interpretations relating to Christ's ascension, and to the millennium) the regeneration here spoken of corresponds to the time when "the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory;" that is, to the time of the general resurrection and judgment at the end of the world; and thus, this "regeneration" is that final and perfect "restitution," or restoration and renovation, "of all things," to which previous changes, however necessary, were but steps, and of which they were but imperfect specimens and types.\* Without limiting the idea to the apostles, Paul says to the Corinthians,† "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" This seems to indicate that all the redeemed, being first acquitted themselves, shall join, as assessors, in approving the sentence pronounced on the wicked by the Judge of all; some peculiar honour, however, being intended for the apostles. But we shall not enlarge farther on this point here, as a similar declaration occurs in a subsequent part of this Gospel.‡

Let us pass on to the consideration of that part of our Lord's reply which is given by Luke: "*And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*" Jesus warned his disciples to expect great trials. "If any man will come after me," said he, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;" and he here notices two of the chief trials which the apostles had already sustained, and which many more of his followers were to sustain afterwards. The first trial he notices is that of the loss of property. He here mentions "house," and, according to Matthew and Mark, he added "lands." Now, it is very easy to pretend to make light of such a loss; when it comes, however, it is a real and a great trial. It requires a great mind to bear it calmly, even when it comes in the most unavoidable and least painful way; but, when it comes with heavy aggravations, and when it might be avoided by a slight sacrifice of principle, which is unfaithfulness to Christ, nothing but special grace and strong faith can uphold men in their integrity. And yet, if the loss of property be a heavy trial, the loss of near and dear relations, such as a parent, a partner, brethren, and children—that is,

\* See Acts iii. 21; 2 Pet. iii. 13; Rev. xxi.

† 1 Cor. vi. 2.

‡ Luke xxii. 28.

the being obliged to forego their society, or good opinion, for Christ's sake—is still a heavier trial; and this is the other trial here particularized. In these relations men's hearts are generally so bound up, that their comfort, humanly speaking, depends on them. The disciples had literally left their families and friends at first, and were commonly much away from them in accompanying Christ: in this they acted, for the most part, in opposition to the wishes of their friends; and thus there would arise, not only a cessation of intercourse, but, on the part of the unconverted, an alienation of affection, when the members of families were divided. But, whenever property and friends are thus left simply "for the kingdom of God's sake," and not from whim, or passion, or restlessness—whenever such advantages and endearments are parted with, purely because they cannot be retained with a good conscience—whenever there is a renunciation, not of duty with regard to them, but of comfort in them, because of their interfering with the duty belonging to Christ (for it is not so much the suffering as the cause which makes the confessor and the martyr); then is there a fine triumph of Christian principle, and then is there that loss which Christ has engaged to make up.

Our Lord promises all his wronged and afflicted people both a present and a future reward. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Jesus engages, first, that every one who shall make such sacrifices in his cause "shall receive manifold more," or, as it is in Matthew and Mark, "an hundred-fold, in this present time;" that is, in this life or this world, as distinguished from the other life or the world to come. The losses and other sufferings which come on Christ's people for his sake, and which they bear and improve aright, are sometimes followed, in this world, by great external providential blessings, and are repaid, or more than repaid, in kind. Of this Job was a remarkable instance. Great as was his prosperity in his substance and family at first, and grievous as were his losses, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job;" "also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before;" so "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."\* By such a promise, however, as this now under consideration, the Lord has not bound himself always to requite his injured or afflicted people, in this literal and outward manner; neither is it the

\* Job xiii.

usual procedure of his providence to do so; and yet he does requite them graciously and abundantly, even in this life. This promise is fulfilled, as to its spirit, if they receive manifold more in value though not in kind; and that they do all receive. Whatever be their outward condition it is blessed to them, and they are blessed in it. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."—"Godliness with contentment is great gain." But it is chiefly to spiritual prosperity and consolation that this promise refers. The blessings of pardon, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, sanctification, and communion with God, are of more real advantage to them, and afford them more solid happiness, than any earthly good. Enjoying these, their "soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness," and their "mouth praises the Lord with joyful lips." These are "better unto them than thousands of gold and silver;" and they "rejoice at his word as one that findeth great spoil." If they lose some friends, they gain others; especially, they gain the friendship of that God "in whose favour is life," and whose "loving-kindness is better than life." Thus are they richer and happier, even in this life, and at the time, than they could be by cleaving to the world, and wounding their consciences by a denial of their Lord.

But the Redeemer also assures his disciples, that those who leave all for his sake shall receive, "in the world to come, life everlasting." This is a description of the state of the glorified in heaven, and a very brief, but very comprehensive and striking description; for it is life indeed, life intelligent, active, pure, joyous, eternal. "The Lord God" "will give" to his people, "glory," as well as "grace." It is very pleasing to think that this was to be the portion of the apostles. There was, it is true, one exception; but Jesus was aware of that, and faithful Matthias was to supply the place of Judas: Jesus, therefore, does not stop to make the distinction, but speaks of twelve thrones as all to be filled, and also of eternal life, in a way which was applicable to the far greater number of the apostles, nay, to all of them except one. The same reward, however, awaits all his faithful followers: and we may just observe the infinite value of this reward, as another proof that it is a reward of grace, and not of debt; for, what proportion could the imperfect services of a lifetime bear to "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" Such a promise might well support Christ's followers under every sorrow

and loss. In this prospect "they endured a great fight of affliction," "and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The conviction that they were already the children of God, and should, therefore, in due time, be received into their Father's house above, far outweighed with them their present troubles. In the language of one of the most severely tried of them: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Before we leave this subject (for there are two distinct subjects in the passage which we have now read for exposition), ask yourselves if you can indeed say to Christ, with Peter and the other apostles, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." He himself positively declares,\* "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." What is to be said, then, if you know not what it is to have suffered in any way, or to have denied yourselves in any way, for religion—if you have not forsaken anything for Christ, but are still wedded to your sins, or your possessions, or your employments, or your worldly friends and acquaintances, so as to be prevented from heartily giving yourselves up to his grace and guidance? You are not his followers, you are not Christians, you share not in their present privileges, nor, if you thus continue, shall you partake of their future reward. Think well of this matter; and, with God's help, let no consideration of gain interfere with your pursuit of salvation; for what would it profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? Let no apprehension of any loss of property which you may sustain deter you from following the Lord fully. As the man of God said to king Amaziah, when he thus expressed his unwillingness to lose the money which he had paid to hire auxiliaries in a way of which God disapproved, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents?" so say we to each of you: "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."† Neither let any consideration arising from your connexion, however near, with unconverted persons, prevent you from following the Lord

\* Luke xiv. 33.

† 2 Chron. xxv. 9.

Jesus Christ in a faithful and devoted life. The opposition of the unrenewed mind to true Christianity has not ceased, nor will the utmost kindness of natural affection always prevent it from betraying itself. It will often happen that a house will be divided against itself—that of the members of the same family some will be careless and some pious, and that the former will be displeased with the course which the latter are adopting, and throw obstacles in their way. But, if you would have the peace of God here, and life everlasting hereafter, you must rise superior to such temptations, and you must firmly, though respectfully, face them, and overcome them. You must resemble Levi,\* “who said of his father and mother, I have not seen them: neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children;” but “observed God’s word, and kept his covenant.”—“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father’s house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.” Nor let any treatment, however injurious, or reproachful, from any quarter, keep you back from following Christ. Be careful to give no just cause for such treatment; but, if it come, be not disheartened. Contemplate often your Saviour’s glory, and that will irresistibly attract you; look habitually to his power, and that will strengthen you. He will secure your safety and happiness now and for ever. Do him honour, then, by a cheerful confidence at the present time; “rejoice also and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.” He himself tells you what you shall have, and he gives you his oath, as well as his word for it. Rest satisfied with that security; for he is “the faithful and true Witness.” Exercise faith in his promise, and be steady in his cause, and you shall have a sweet foretaste of his goodness in time, and the full enjoyment of his blessedness through eternity.

Luke goes on to say, in the 31st verse, “*Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.*” Our Lord was now on his last journey to Jerusalem, to attend the passover, and to offer up himself, the true sacrifice; and, as usual, he was attended by his apostles. This point of the history corresponds with that in Matt. xx. 17, where we read that “Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve

\* Deut. xxxiii. 9; Ps. xlv. 10.



apostles apart in the way." The awful things which he was about explicitly to unfold, were not fit to be heard by all. He imparted them to his chosen disciples (who took a deep interest in whatever might befall him), that they might be somewhat prepared, and might be able to note the fulfilment of these things afterwards. He was going up to Jerusalem—a place so notorious for the persecution of God's messengers, that our Lord said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Having taken his disciples aside, he told them how all the ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled in him, especially those relating to his death and resurrection. These we still find, most minute and circumstantial, in the Old Testament; and Peter observes that "the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

In the next two verses, our Lord thus mentions more particularly the events to which he referred. "*For he*" (the Son of man) "*shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.*" According to Matthew,\* he expressly mentions that they were to "crucify him." As we have a full historical account of these events afterwards, it would be premature and improper to enlarge on them here, where they are only predicted. Certain it is that all these prophecies were fulfilled in the most exact manner; so that Christ himself, after his death and resurrection, thus appealed to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus:† "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Plain as the meaning of these intimations now appears to all who have any knowledge of the leading facts of the history of redemption, it was unintelligible to the disciples at the time. To this purport, the language of the evangelist is full and strong: "*And they understood none of these*

\* Matthew xx. 19.

† Luke xxiv. 25.

*things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*" So it was before,\* when our Lord told them that "he should be delivered into the hands of men,"—"They understood not the saying." And so it was still, when they had had longer time to become acquainted with the genius of his religion, and when he expressed himself much more fully and explicitly. The expectation which they still entertained of his assuming temporal power, would not allow them to think of his dying; nor could they reconcile what he himself had said of the coming glory of his kingdom with his passing through a scene of such humiliation. Though they understood these things when they remembered them afterwards, their prejudices at the time were such as to prevent them from understanding them at all, or affixing any meaning to what he said. Such is the weakness of men; and so effectual are prejudices in blinding the mind and warping the judgment.

Let us beware of every improper bias; let us, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby;" and let us pray that the Lord would "open our understandings to understand the Scriptures." Illustrated as these things, which Jesus spoke privately by the way to his disciples, now are by subsequent events, and accustomed as we are to have them explained, we shall be very dull indeed, if we fail to apprehend their import, and very culpable, if we do not find in them much that is edifying and consoling. Waving various remarks which would be fully as natural on many other occasions, the two following seem to be peculiarly appropriate to the way in which these most important events are here introduced.

First, *The Lord Jesus Christ distinctly foresaw and foretold all the sufferings which lay before him.* We are, at times, ready to wish that we were able to foresee what is to befall us; but this is not wise. In denying us this, God evidences his wisdom and goodness. It may well be doubted whether most men, if they could see beforehand all the toil, and trouble, and grief, and pain, and calamity lying before them, would be able to bear the sight. Dread of what was to come would blast every present enjoyment, and life would become a burden. The Lord, has, therefore, in great kindness, cast a veil over futurity. It was not so, however, with our Saviour. He "knew all things;" and, therefore, he knew the particular things which were to happen to him-

\* Luke ix. 45.

self. The circumstances of his sufferings and death, in all their extent and horror, lay clearly and fully before him. And, as he foresaw them, so he often foretold them. He said that he was the good Shepherd who was to "give his life for the sheep"—that he was to "give his life a ransom for many." In other places, such as that before us, he was amazingly particular in the delineation of circumstances. The minuteness with which he foretold his sufferings, fulfilled as they were, is a clear proof that he was a true prophet. Indeed, the single circumstance of his foretelling that he was to be crucified, is decisive in this way. It was, humanly speaking, not to be supposed, and even altogether improbable, that he should be crucified. There might have appeared to be some probability that he would be set upon and murdered by a ferocious rabble, or that he would, with some form of law, be put to death by stoning, which was the appointed mode of punishing false prophets; but, that he should be crucified, was not only not to be foreseen, or conjectured by human sagacity, but so unlikely, that no impostor would have thought of giving it out. The same remark is obviously applicable to the event of his resurrection, with the additional consideration of its being miraculous. These fulfilled predictions prove him to be, not only a true prophet, but the chief of prophets, and the Son of God, both as they were uttered by himself, and as they embody much of the substance of the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah. Let us, then, unhesitatingly "believe and be sure that this is that Christ, the Son of the living God;" and let us receive him in all his offices.

Secondly, Our Lord not only foresaw and foretold these sufferings, but *willingly and eagerly went forward to endure them*. Though he knew what was to befall him at Jerusalem, he did not hesitate to go; nay, he resolutely bent his steps thither. Mark\* gives the following striking description of the manner of his progress at this moment: "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid." He did not lag behind, but he pressed on in the front; so that his disciples were amazed at the resolution which he manifested, and were afraid, both for him and for themselves. From eternity, he cheerfully undertook to perform his part in the covenant of redemption, "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his

\* Mark x. 32.

delights were with the sons of men." When he came into the world, he came saying, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." And as the hour of his being offered up approached, he testified greater and greater eagerness to go forward. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," said he, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Let us imitate his alacrity in going forward to whatever trials and sorrows may lie before us. Let us also admire the display of love towards us in this resolute procedure. His purpose was fixed. Nothing could make him desist. He advanced with determined step, baring, as it were, his bosom to the stroke, and anxious to be on the proper spot, as the destined victim, when Jehovah should give the command, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow; smite the Shepherd." Such was the amazing resolution of his soul, when he marched before his disciples, going up to Jerusalem.

To conclude. *Let us all see that we place our sole hope of acceptance with God on that meritorious obedience unto death to which Christ was now going forward.* Let us take care that we understand these things, and also believe them. Let us understand and believe, not only that he died, but that he died for our sins; and not only that he rose again, but that he rose again for our justification, and to confirm the perfection and acceptance of his atonement. Let us trust in him who is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood: and let us, at the same time, improve his death and resurrection in the way of dying unto sin and living unto righteousness. Thus shall we be clear from every accusation, and safe against every danger, and be able humbly yet confidently to say, "Who shall lay any thing to our charge? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

## LECTURE XCVIII.

## LUKE XVIII. 35-43.

"And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging: 36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

JERICHO was a celebrated city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and situated about twenty miles from Jerusalem, and six or eight from the river Jordan. It was also called "The city of palm-trees," because of the abundance of these trees in the fertile plain in which it lay.\* It was the first city in the promised land taken by Joshua. He destroyed the city, according to God's command, and denounced on the man who should dare to rebuild it a prophetic curse, to the effect that his eldest son should die (in what way is not said), when he began the work, and his youngest when he finished it. Accordingly, we read† that, in the days of king Ahab, "did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son, Segub." The purpose of God being served in its overthrow, in its subsequently lying for more than five centuries in a state of desolation, as a monument of his righteous displeasure against iniquity, and in the judgments inflicted on the individual who had the hardihood to set the malediction at defiance; no permanent providential curse appears to have rested on the place afterwards; on the contrary, it was dwelt in with safety, it became a city of considerable note, and the Son of

\* Deut. xxxiv. 3; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15. † Josh. vi. 26; 1 Kings xvi. 34.

God wrought a miracle in its vicinity, and honoured it with his presence.

Let us consider, first of all, the apparent difference between the three evangelists in their accounts of this miracle. Matt. xx. 29: "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side." Mark x. 46: "And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway-side begging." Luke, in the passage under consideration, says: "*And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging.*" Three difficulties present themselves in harmonizing these three passages. First, when we compare both Mark and Luke with Matthew, we find that they speak only of one blind man, whereas, he speaks of two. Secondly, when we compare Luke alone with Matthew and Mark, we find that he says, according to our version, that the miracle of which he speaks was performed "as Christ was come nigh unto Jericho;" whereas, they say that the miracle of which they speak was performed as Christ "departed from," or "went out" of Jericho. And, thirdly, when we compare Mark alone with Matthew, we find that they agree in the latter point, but differ in the former. In order to reconcile these accounts, some have thought it necessary to suppose that our Lord cured one blind man before he entered into Jericho, and two when he was leaving it. The supposition of three miracles, however, would be necessary to remove all the difficulties, if we are not to use common and reasonable liberty of explanation;—that is, it would be necessary to suppose that he cured, according to Luke, one blind man before entering into the city; according to Mark, one blind man as he left it; and according to Matthew, by a different act of power, two blind men as he left it. But that these three passages contain an account of three, or even of two distinct miracles, is highly improbable; because they all occur about the same period of the history; because the circumstances introduced are, on the whole, so similar; and because if our Lord had cured one blind man before entering into the city, it is to be supposed that the people would not have endeavoured to prevent another blind man, or other blind men, from applying to him when he left it, but would rather have encouraged all who were in that afflicted state to come to him for relief.

Accordingly, it is the commonly received opinion, that but one miracle is described in all these passages, and that it consisted in our Lord curing two blind men as he was departing from Jericho. As to the difficulty in the way of this interpretation arising from Mark and Luke mentioning only one man, that is obviated by the reasonable, and often applied rule, that the omission by one writer of what is stated, or part of what is stated by another, does not amount to a denial of it. Mark and Luke say that Jesus cured one blind man; but they do not say that he did not cure two. That they mention only one of them, is, probably, because he was the more remarkable and better known, and now acted the more prominent part of the two. As to the other two difficulties, which are substantially the same, they will be obviated, if we go into the opinion of the generality of commentators, that, as the Greek word used by Luke sometimes signifies to *be* near, it ought to be so rendered here; that is, the clause, "As he was come nigh unto Jericho," should be, "As he was nigh unto Jericho,"\* without giving any hint whether he was going towards Jericho, or departing from it, but merely intimating that he wrought the miracle in its neighbourhood. Let us proceed, then, with the history on this principle, following, chiefly, the edition of it given by Luke.

When Jesus was near Jericho, "a certain blind man," whom Mark calls Bartimeus, which is, the son of Timeus, "sat by the way-side begging." On this, one of the best of our commentators† makes the following judicious remarks: "The beggars, of whom we read in Scripture, lived in the place or neighbourhood where they asked alms, and so were known to be real objects of charity: they also (thus) gave a kind of pledge for their good behaviour. This widely differs from the modern case of strolling beggars, who are frequently impostors, and still more generally profligate

\* *Ἐν τῇ ἰσχυρίᾳ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱερὶχὸν.* Dr Campbell will not admit the justness of this rendering; yet authorities preponderate in favour of it. Reference is made to Luke x. 9, xviii. 40, and the Septuagint, Isa. l. 8; Jer. xxiii. 23. "Comme il était près de Jerico."—*Le Cl. and Beau.* It would be unfair, indeed, not to observe that Luke says, in the beginning of the following chapter, and after the account of this miracle, that "Jesus entered and passed through Jericho:" but our Lord may have remained for some days at Jericho, and the miracle may have been performed when he went out of it to some place in the vicinity, though he afterwards returned to it.—See *Grotius, Lightfoot, Campbell, Scott, Doddridge.*

† Scott.

characters. Except in extraordinary cases, it is in all respects most advisable to relieve those who are known by us both as to their wants and conduct: and provided less be not given in charity, and no extreme case neglected, the refusal of relief to vagrant beggars, is rather a proof of discretion, than an indication of defect in beneficence. If this conduct were generally adopted, the indigent would, in ordinary cases, be compelled to abide where they are known; the sums expended in charity would be far more profitably applied; the interests of morality and religion would be better secured; and the poor themselves would be far more adequately relieved." It is better when spontaneous charity provides the means of support for the indigent at home; but when that is not the case, it is not only lawful for them, but incumbent on them, to go out to solicit alms. Blind Bartimeus, accordingly, was sitting for this purpose by the side of a public road, which was a likely situation for success; and, as already noticed, there was another blind man sitting beside him, or near him, for the same purpose of begging.

*"And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant."* Very few cases have ever occurred of men being both blind and deaf. Such an infliction is one of God's strange works; nay, by a kind provision, when any one of these senses is wanting, it is often, in some degree, compensated by more than ordinary acuteness of the other. The quick-glancing eye of the deaf and dumb is well known, as are also the exquisite relish of most blind people for music, and their power of discriminating sounds of all kind, to which may be added the fineness of their sense of touch, by which they are said to have been able, in some cases, to distinguish different colours of cloth. Bartimeus, though blind, was not deaf. He heard a multitude of people passing by, and inquired what was the occasion of the unusual concourse.

*"And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by."* It was natural in him to make the inquiry; and it was only what common humanity demanded, to give him the information he requested. Jesus was a common name among the Jews; Jesus of Nazareth, therefore, was the natural way, according to their custom, of distinguishing our Lord from others of the same name, by the most usual place of his residence. Whatever contempt may have been associated with this title in the minds of his enemies, it is a noble one in the estimation of his friends; and it is peculiarly endeared



to them by its having been that by which he was designated in the inscription on his cross. They know that "some good thing came out of Nazareth"—nay, the very best thing, the most gracious and most glorious person the world ever saw. It was well for these two blind men that they were by the way-side when Jesus was literally passing by; it is well, in so far, for us, that we are here, when he is figuratively passing by, in the invisible, but real, glory of the description of his person and work, and it is to be hoped in the energetic operation of his grace. Who can tell, whether some mental eyes, which have hitherto been closed against the light of life, may not be unlocked to see for themselves what all this means, and to admire the opening dawn of the heaven-born day?

No sooner did Bartimeus learn who was passing by, than "*he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*" He had often heard of Jesus before, and of the miracles of kindness which he had performed; hence the thought immediately struck him that he might cure him too, and, in this hope, he applied to him by prayer. He besought him, in general language, to have mercy, or to take pity on him; but the particular favour he needed, as his afflicted condition showed, was the restoration of his sight; and besides this, it is probable that he had also some desire for those spiritual blessings which the way in which he addressed our Lord proved his belief of his ability to bestow. Mark the *humility* which characterized this prayer. He pleaded on the ground, not of right, or merit, but of mercy, free, undeserved, sovereign compassion. And so must we plead, if we are to be successful; for, the Lord "fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away." Observe, again, the *faith* of this prayer. He applied to Jesus as "the Son of David;" and this was one of the designations of the Messiah, who, though the Lord of David, was yet the Son of David—his Son by way of eminence, his most illustrious descendant: and he applied to him as able and willing to help him. And so we must apply to him under the same character, trusting in his power and grace to save us. Notice, too, the *earnestness* of this prayer. Bartimeus "cried" with a loud voice, called out vehemently, from the intenseness of inward desire. So, if we would prevail, we must be in earnest—we must ask, seek, and knock. Thus saith the Lord, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your

heart." Nor less remarkable was the *perseverance* of this prayer; this, however, becomes more apparent in the next verse.

"*And they who went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace.*"\* The multitude, erroneously supposing that his application was a troublesome intrusion, and would be in vain, chid him severely, and ordered him to be silent. So, even the disciples rebuked those who were bringing the infants to Christ;† and so, some of the Pharisees, more in character, called on Jesus to rebuke the multitude of the disciples, when they were shouting their hosannas to the Son of David, on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.‡ Blind Bartimeus heeded not their objections; but, as every attempt to confine a steady torrent only causes it to swell up higher and flow with greater force, on their endeavours to restrain him, "*he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*" So, the apostle Paul "prayed the Lord thrice," that the thorn in his flesh might depart from him; and so, Jesus himself, in his agony, went away, and "prayed thrice, saying the same words." In like manner, we "ought always to pray, and not to faint." We may expect, indeed, to meet with various hinderances in coming to the mercy-seat, but we must not be prevented by them. Those who will not enter into the kingdom of God themselves, will always be disposed to endeavour to hinder us from entering; and our own hearts will whisper many lies, and present many obstacles; but, in defiance of all discouragements from without and from within, "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" let us continue "instant in prayer," and we are sure to be successful.

Let us now consider the happy result of this application. Jesus, who had far more compassion than any of his followers, and of whom it was said,§ "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper," hearing how vehemently and repeatedly Bartimeus urged his request, "*stood*" still in the midst of his progress, "*and commanded*" Bartimeus (and his companion in trouble) "*to be brought unto him.*" On this, as is described by Mark, the people, who had been displeased with their importunity, expecting to see a miracle, "call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." Thus, the Lord is now, as it were, standing in the midst of

\* Or, charged him to hold his peace.

† Luke xix. 39.

‡ Verse 15.

§ Ps. lxxii. 12.

us; he is "waiting that he may be gracious unto us:"\* he is also addressing to us the kind invitations of his Word, which are great encouragements to us to be of good cheer, and to hope for acceptance on our coming to him. He is waiting, let us not keep him waiting longer than is necessary. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," says he. He is waiting, it is true, and yet he is waiting in a standing posture; let us, therefore, comply quickly with his call, lest we exhaust his patience, and he walk away, so to speak, to return no more.

Mark farther states, that as soon as the blind man heard the call, "he cast away his garment," that is, his loose upper garment, that it might not entangle or retard him in his movements, "and rose, and came to Jesus." So should every sinner, to whom the call of the gospel is addressed, cast away from him the cloak of self-righteousness, the encumbrances of sin and of the world, and every thing which would impede his coming to the Saviour, count all things but loss that he may win Christ, and run to throw himself, in humility and confidence, at his feet.

*"And when he was come near, Jesus asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight."* The omniscient Redeemer was quite aware of the defect under which this man laboured, and of the relief which he desired, and already entertained the spontaneous purpose of curing him; but, for his own glory, for profitably attracting the attention of the multitude, and for more thoroughly impressing the mind of Bartimeus himself, Christ wished to draw a confession of his blindness, and an expression of what he wanted from the man's own lips. In like manner, for such purposes as these, and not for his own information, or for moving him to do that from which he is averse, he requires of us a full confession of our spiritual misery, and a direct and explicit application, by prayer, for spiritual mercies. "Thus saith the Lord God," with regard even to what he has expressly promised, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."† Let us, then, come to him with particular confessions, and particular requests. Let us pour out our hearts, and spread forth our wants before him; "in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God," and we shall have a gracious answer.

\* Isa. xxx. 18.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

In reply to Bartimeus' application, "*Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.*" Matthew mentions that our Lord "touched their eyes:" which action visibly connected him with the miracle, and showed that "virtue went out of him" to heal them. The connection between faith and miracle, here stated, is also mentioned on other occasions. Our Lord required faith in the subjects of his miracles, or those who brought them to him, or were connected with them. "Believest thou this?" said he to Martha, before raising her brother; and, of the impotent man at Lystra, we read that Paul "perceived he had faith to be healed."\* Jesus said to the two blind men whom he cured, before this, in a house, "According to your faith be it unto you." He also told the woman who had the issue of blood, and the two lepers, that their faith had saved them.† In the case of Bartimeus, these words implied that there was an instrumental connection between his faith and his cure, so that his cure came to him as a blessing. Moreover, from the general principle that the results of faith must be according to its extent, and from the view Bartimeus expressed of Jesus as the Son of David, and his subsequent conduct, it is plain that he had, not only faith to be cured of his bodily defect, but justifying faith, which saved his soul. So, our Saviour said to the "woman who was a sinner," but whose sins were forgiven, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."‡ Here let us be reminded of the necessity of faith in Christ, commensurate with our wants as ignorant, condemned, and depraved creatures: and let us be anxious to "obtain like precious faith" with all his people.

The cure effected on Bartimeus was instantaneous and complete, and obviously altogether miraculous: "*Immediately he received his sight.*" Surely this demonstrated that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and is one of the many evidences which should confirm our faith in the Gospel. This showed that the time thus predicted by Isaiah was come, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened;" and that this was he to whom Jehovah said, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

None can entertain any doubt as to the delight which this

\* John xi. 26; Acts xiv. 9. † Matt. ix. 29; Luke viii. 48, xvii. 19.

‡ Luke vii. 50.

cure would afford Bartimeus, as a temporal mercy. With regard to the general effect which it produced on his mind and conduct, we are told that it was excellent: "*He followed Christ, glorifying God.*" He followed him on the way, loudly praising the Lord for his deliverance: and it is to be inferred that he continued one of his stated followers or disciples, full of gratitude for the Lord's goodness both to his body and soul, ready on all suitable occasions to express that gratitude in words, and habitually manifesting it in an exemplary and holy life, and being in himself a living and visible proof of the divine mercy and power. How unlike him are they who call on the Lord in trouble, but forget him on their deliverance! Let us not act so ungratefully and wickedly. Let the deliverances we experience lead us to follow Christ, with his kindness indelibly engraven on our hearts, audibly celebrated with our lips, and practically evidenced in our lives.

The account of the miracle closes thus: "*And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*" It would have been worse than stupid not to have been impressed by such a sight; however transitory, therefore, the impression might prove on many of them, they were all much struck at the time, and they acknowledged and praised the power and goodness of God in sending such a prophet, and working such a miracle. For favours done to others, then, as well as for favours done to ourselves, we should bless the Lord. Let us glorify the Father and the Son for all mercies, temporal and spiritual, bestowed on our fellow-creatures. Especially, let us praise the Lord when we see or hear of any whose faith hath saved them. "They had heard," says Paul, "that he who persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me." Would that all men admired and magnified God's marvellous loving-kindness! "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

Though we have noticed the lessons which are read to us in many of the particular circumstances of this miracle, there are two general points of view, in reference to which it will be right still farther to improve it.

Let us improve this miracle, first, *in reference to literal bodily blindness.* As to the improvement which should be made of the trial by those who are themselves blind: let them ever remember who it is that has sent the affliction on

them, that they may not murmur nor despond, but bear it submissively and patiently. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?"\* They can hardly fail to trace up the trial to their Creator if they have been born blind; and they should not forget that, in all other cases, his hand is more or less directly concerned. If they have lost the faculty of sight after being possessed of it for some time, let them endeavour to say, from the heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Except in the few cases which are within the reach of natural means, they are not to expect or to seek to be cured. They have no promise of miraculous help, and therefore they have no ground to pray, or to exercise faith for restoration in that way. But they may derive much benefit to their souls from the visitation, and may have the finest consolation under it, however heavy. As they cannot look out, let them look inward, with the more undisturbed and more intense interest, on the spiritual state of their own minds; and let them be the disciples of Him who saith, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." How beautiful and instructive the lines of the first of English poets, who, like the wakeful bird of night, "sung darkling!"

"Seasons return; but not to me returns  
 Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,  
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
 Surrounds me: from the cheerful ways of men  
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair  
 Presented with a universal blank  
 Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,  
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
 So much the rather Thou, celestial Light,  
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
 Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
 Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
 Of things invisible to mortal sight."

How dismal the state of those blind persons who have no saving illumination, and whose eyes are never to open till they open on the miseries of the condemned! On the other hand, how happy those whose eyes, though they are never to open on this world, are to open on all the glories of heaven! A person† who had lost his sight, expressed him-

\* Exod. iv. 11.

† Edward Polhill, Esq., mentioned in Pike and Hayward's Cases of Conscience.

self, in a letter which he dictated to a friend as follows: "I am blind, but, bless God, content. All that he doth is wise and just. All that comes in his will is welcome. His choice is better than mine. Eyes might have blinded, but blindness shall enlighten me. God hath not cast me off, but called me aside into the invisible world. I may say, It is good being here. I cannot see outward things; but the new creature in the heart is a better sight than all the world. I cannot read the letters in the Bible; but if I have the quickening Spirit it is enough. The veil is upon my eyes; but my work is to rend off the veil of time from my heart, and to look into eternity—to put back all creatures, and to have all in God. Near enough to him I cannot be. If the film were off my eyes, I should see the outward world; but if the flesh were off my heart, I should love the blessed God—which is infinitely better. Through grace I hope to come to that blessed region where God is all. In his light we shall see light, and in his love we shall be blessed for ever."

As to the duty of others to the blind: it is very cruel and sinful to deceive them, or injure them, or in any way treat them ill. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God; I am the Lord."—"Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way; and all the people shall say, Amen."\* Instead of this, it is a duty to show them all kindness. If they stand in need of it, it is a duty to contribute to their support. But, though they may be in easy circumstances, they are very dependent in many other respects. It is truly benevolent and Christian to pay attention to their wishes—to conduct them whither they desire to go—to inform them of what is passing around them, and, especially, to read the Word of God to them, and converse with them on the things which belong to their peace. This is indeed to be like Job—"eyes to the blind."

Secondly, Let us improve this miracle in reference to *figurative or spiritual blindness*. To apply the miracle in this way is no improper stretch, but is sanctioned by the example of Christ himself, in the case of the cure of the man who was born blind, which is related in the 9th chapter of John; much of what he said there being of such a nature as would have been equally applicable had he seen fit to introduce it here. That account closes with these words: "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into

\* Lev. xix. 14; Deut. xxvii. 18.

this world, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Men are all spiritually blind by nature; that is, they are ignorant of spiritual and eternal things; they have no perception of the evil of sin, of the glory of God, of the excellence of the Saviour, of the beauty of holiness. They are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But believers are enlightened to know these things. "The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Inquire, then, whether you be still blind, or whether you have received your sight, in this spiritual sense. Can it be said of you, "Ye were once darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord?" This change is not always equally striking in its circumstances; nor is it always possible to ascertain its precise means, or manner, or time: but it is a real and a great change, and its effects are very similar on all its subjects. Some have obtained this sight in very early life, so that they cannot remember the time when they were altogether blind, altogether destitute of spiritual perception and feeling. If this has been your experience, your life must have been, on the whole, exemplary throughout; and you must have made very considerable progress. It is plain, however, that many have no such light from their childhood, and hence, that those of you who lived in a careless state till you were grown up, but are now happily changed, must be conscious that it is different with you from what it once was. However unable you might be to answer many questions which might be put to you, this "one thing you know, that whereas you were blind, now you see."

Let those of you who are still blind take warning. You live, no doubt, in a land of light, on which the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his beams—there is no want of light in that respect; but you are still in darkness, because you are blind, wilfully and criminally blind. Your natural darkness is increased by habits of voluntary sin, and by the delusions of the world and Satan. "If our gospel



be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." You are not altogether destitute of ideas of religion, but you discern nothing aright, you have no insight into the things of God; in a word, you are in darkness. It may be that this assertion is offensive to you, and that you are ready indignantly to ask, as did the unbelieving Jews of old, "Are we blind also?" If you do put this question, we answer—Yes; though you may flatter yourselves with the thought of your superior discernment, and may bask in all the gaiety of the world's sunshine, you are blind, stone-blind, for into your hearts not one ray of heavenly, sanctifying light has yet penetrated. And is not yours a pitiable case? We pity the poor blind man who sees not the cheering light of the sun, who gropes for the wall, who stumbles at noonday as at night, and who is necessitated to depend for subsistence on the precarious bounty of those who pass him on the highway; but, if he know the Lord, and if his eyes have seen his salvation, he is far less to be pitied than you. The blindness of the eyes is no more to be compared with the blindness of the mind, than the body with the soul, or time with eternity. Consider how sinful and dangerous it is thus to turn from him who came to give sight to the blind, thus to refuse to "anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see." There is the utmost danger, that, if you stumble on a little longer, you will stumble and fall, to rise no more. Begin diligently to use the means appointed for enabling you to see. Carry in your hand the Word of God, which is given to be a "lamp to your feet, and a light to your path." Pray, also, for the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit. Suppose a number of blind men shut up in a dark room; there are two obstacles to their seeing—there is the want of light, and there is their want of the power of vision: two things are therefore necessary, before they can see, namely, that light be brought, or admitted into the room, and that their eyes be opened to behold it. Carry in as many candles as you please, or let in the sun's blaze at noonday—they would see just as little as before, if their eyes remained as they were. In like manner, in order to saving knowledge, there must be, not only the light of external information, but the Spirit's work of illumination on the mind itself. Christ not only "opened the Scriptures" to his disciples,

but "opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures." Adopt, then, the Psalmist's prayer: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And, may He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Let those of you, finally, who are restored to sight, in the spiritual sense, be careful to use the faculty aright. Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity, and be quickened in the way of the Lord. Be careful, like Bartimeus, to follow Christ, glorifying God. Now that you are "light in the Lord, walk as children of the light." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." May the Lord illuminate, and comfort, and sanctify you, more and more. "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to them who believe."

## LECTURE XCIX.

## LUKE XIX. 1-10.

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2. And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. 5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. 6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. 9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

IN the last lecture, we considered the miracle of curing the blind, which our Lord wrought in the neighbourhood of Jericho; and we have now before us another most interesting and instructive occurrence, which took place when "*he entered and passed,*" or rather, had entered and was passing "*through*" that city. In this occurrence, the power of his saving grace is signally illustrated.

"*Zaccheus,*" of whom Luke is the only evangelist who speaks, and he only in this passage, "*was the chief among the publicans.*"\* This seems to mean that he was the principal tax-gatherer, or farmer of the public revenues, in that district, having other persons employed under him. He must have found large security, and he may have possessed much property, before he was advanced to so responsible a situation. At the time here referred to, he is declared to have been "*rich.*" Riches, as we had lately occasion to see, do oppose very great obstacles to salvation; but what is impossible with men, is possible with God; and here we have a

\* 'Αρχισιλωτης.

pleasing example of his grace triumphing over all the temptations of wealth.

It is said of Zaccheus that "*he sought to see Jesus who he was.*" We naturally desire to see persons who occupy exalted stations, or who have on any account been much talked of; and though nothing more should come of it, it is some satisfaction merely to be able to say that we have seen them. By this time the fame of Jesus was spread throughout the whole country, and the miracle which he had just performed near Jericho must have deepened the interest felt in him in that city and neighbourhood: no wonder, then, that Zaccheus had a strong desire to see "who," that is, what manner of person, he was. Similar to this was the circumstance which occurred soon after this, as mentioned in the 12th chapter of John, from the 20th verse: "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came, therefore, to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." These Greeks were accordingly brought to Jesus, who discoursed in a very edifying manner in their presence. This desire on the part of Zaccheus seems to have been the effect of mere curiosity; at least, there is no evidence that he was influenced by any higher motive, but rather, from the general complexion of the case, a presumption to the contrary.

Anxious as he was to see Jesus, he "*could not for the press,*" for the multitude that thronged around him in his progress. This would have been a considerable obstacle to the gratification of his wish, though he had been a man of the ordinary height of body; but it was much more so, "*because he was little of stature.*" A man may be of little stature, and yet have a great mind: and it is chiefly the mind that makes the man. "Saul was a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people;" yet he was an unhappy and a bad man, and was much surpassed, in every thing excellent, by the stripling, David. "The Lord said unto Samuel," concerning Eliab, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him."\* Any thing remarkable in this respect should neither be gloried in on the one hand, nor felt as a grievance

\* 1 Sam. ix. 2, xvi. 7.

on the other, but piously referred to its real cause—the will of God; for who by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? Let it be the great desire of us all to obtain spiritual life, strength, and growth, that we may come “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It frequently happens that great, and, in themselves, distressing defects and ailments of body, are productive of much good to the soul. It is true, that, when the Lord has a gracious end in view, he secures it by the appointment of the means; yet, humanly speaking, had it not been for the circumstance here stated with regard to Zaccheus, he probably would never have made the exertion to see Christ which ended so happily.

Let us consider the expedient to which Zaccheus had recourse. Aware that Jesus was advancing in the midst of a crowd, “*he ran before.*” This speed bespoke both eagerness and humility; for, generally speaking, men only run when they are anxious, and those who are proud of their riches or station, and have the affectation of dignity, hardly condescend to run at all. Thus, the act of running in this, and in some other instances, becomes instructive as to the earnestness and immediate attention with which we should proceed in divine things. The venerable patriarch, Abraham, “ran to meet the angels from the tent-door.” On a certain occasion, when Jesus and the apostles “departed by ship privately, the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.” When the women found that Christ was risen from the dead, “They departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word.” Then Peter and John “ran both together, and John did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.”\* Let us manifest similar zeal and despatch in the things which belong to our peace. Let us run to “the name of the Lord,” as to “a strong tower, that we may be safe.” May he “draw us, and we shall run after him.”

As the earnestness and humility of Zaccheus were apparent in his running, they were still more so in the choice he made of a station from which he might be sure to have a good view of Jesus as he passed by. “*He climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him.*” The sycamore-tree is a kind of wild fig-tree, called also the Egyptian fig-tree, from

\* Gen. xviii. 2; Mark vi. 33; Matt. xxviii. 8; John xx. 4.

its abounding in Egypt. That it was common in Judea also appears from its being said that king Solomon "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale, for abundance;" and from the words of Amos, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit."\* The word "sycamore" is compounded of two words, whereof the one signifies a fig-tree, and the other a mulberry-tree; and the sycamore-tree is like the fig-tree in its fruit, and like the mulberry-tree in its leaves. The fruit does not grow in the common way at the end of small branches, or in clusters, but sticking to the trunk: and the tree grows to a great size. Into a large tree of this sort, which grew close to the road, Zaccheus climbed up that he might have a distinct sight of Jesus, who "*was to pass that way.*" Unable to obtain a sight of him in any other way, he had recourse to this somewhat strange, but, in the circumstances of the case, commendable expedient. So, "when the men could not find by what way they might bring in" the paralytic, "because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus."† While many, it may be here remarked, make no attempts to see and know the Saviour at all, there are also many who do make some slight attempts, but who, not succeeding immediately, desist, and are contented to remain in ignorance of him. It is not so, however, with sincere and determined inquirers; for if they fail in one way, they try in another; they are fertile in expedients, and are sure to succeed at last. It may be also here observed that, though curiosity is a very inadequate, and even improper motive for resorting to the place where Christ is spiritually to be seen and heard, yet sovereign grace arrests some who come for no better reason; and therefore, it is well to be within sight of Christ, so to speak, and to be on the spot where his presence is to be expected; and all persons should be encouraged to get within the reach of the means of grace.

However inadequate the views of Zaccheus were, it was well for him, it was wisely and graciously ordered in providence, that he was in that commanding and conspicuous situation at the time; for "*when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him,*" he regarded him attentively, and kindly. He then called him by name, "*Zaccheus.*" This

\* 1 Kings x. 27; Amos vii. 14.

† Luke v. 19.

man was himself a stranger to Jesus, as appears from his desire to see "who," or what manner of person, he was; his being thus accosted by name was, therefore, a proof of the divine knowledge of Jesus, and must, as such, have made a strong impression on his mind. He must have felt somewhat as Nathanael, when our Lord said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." To be thus called by name was a distinguished honour and favour. The Lord said to Moses, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight." Jesus said to Zaccheus, "*Make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.*" He invited himself to spend the day, as a guest, in his house, well knowing his mind, and how welcome he would make him.

There is reason to think that Zaccheus was as great a stranger to faith and holiness, as he was to our Lord's person, before this moment. Now, however, a change was effected on his heart by the look, and words, and special grace of Christ. His energetic look and words afterwards reclaimed backsliding Peter, and they here immediately converted the publican Zaccheus. We mark the first evidence of his conversion in the readiness with which he obeyed the Lord's call, by descending from the tree: "*He made haste, and came down,*" manifesting the same earnestness and despatch with which he "ran before and climbed up," but guided now by a better spirit. So, let those who have been brought to know the grace of God in truth, instead of becoming indolent, persevere and increase in activity, make haste and not delay to keep his commandments, and do whatever their hand findeth to do, with all their might.

We are furnished with another proof of Zaccheus' conversion to the faith of Christ, when it is added, that he "*received him joyfully.*" He entertained him in a suitable and hospitable way, and that with much pleasure, justly considering it a great honour and happiness to have so distinguished a guest under his roof; and this was an evidence that he had received him into his heart, and was joyful in his salvation. What genuine convert would not be delighted were the opportunity given him of having his Lord literally for his guest? Now, though that cannot be, there

is a far more important sense in which we may, and should, receive him; and that is, in his gracious spiritual presence, and saving offices, and in faith and love. "If a man love me," says he, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Let us ever take care to have the Lord for our guest, by cultivating personal and social religion in our dwellings. "O when wilt thou come unto me?" says the Psalmist: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." We virtually receive Christ, too, when we receive his people for his sake. Of this truly Christian hospitality there are two fine examples recorded in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as shown to Paul and his companions. "Lydia besought us," writes Luke (including himself), "saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us;" and the converted jailer "brought Paul and Silas into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." It is well, according to ability, to be "lovers of hospitality, and lovers of good men," and to "use hospitality without grudging." Everything, indeed, that Christians do, should be done cheerfully and joyfully, as unto the Lord. When this is the case, their conduct brings its reward along with it.

What was so joyful an event, however, for Zaccheus, was cause of dissatisfaction to many. "*When they saw it,*" that is, when they saw Jesus go into the publican's house, "*they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*" In this murmuring, however many may have joined, the scribes and Pharisees probably took the lead, as when our Lord went into the house of Levi, and on several other occasions.\* But this was very unreasonable and malevolent. Doubtless this publican was a sinner; but, were they so immaculate as to be entitled to cast a stone at him? Grant that he was even a sinner in the most emphatical sense of the word—a great and open transgressor; he was the more in need of a Saviour; the whole need not a physician, but they who are sick, and Jesus came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Did these objectors mean to insinuate that by such

\* Luke v. 30, vii. 39, xv. 2.



intercourse Jesus intended to encourage the publican in any sin?—the whole tenor of his life and doctrine gave the lie to such a scandal. Nay, though they had known Zaccheus to have been ever so wicked, could that have proved that a change on him for the better was impossible, or even that he was not already a new man? Let us beware of every form of this self-righteous, envious, and unkind spirit; and instead of being offended, let us rejoice, when we see any who were once under the dominion of sin, and strangers to Christ, beginning to receive him as their Saviour, and to be treated as his friends. The truth was, that Zaccheus was already turned from sin to righteousness, and, therefore, that these persons were murmuring at what was causing joy in heaven among the angels of God. We have already seen two proofs of his conversion, and two very satisfactory additional evidences of it still remain to be noticed.

*“And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.”* He stood forward in the presence of the whole company, decidedly and boldly, and was neither afraid nor ashamed to speak of the change which had taken place on him, and to confess Christ. Though, probably, he was not yet fully aware of the glorious constitution of the Saviour’s person, he addressed him reverentially, believingly, and affectionately, by the title of “Lord:” and it should be remarked that the title of *“The Lord,”* given by Luke himself to Jesus, is strongly expressive of his divinity. When Zaccheus said, *“The half of my goods I give to the poor,”* though the words *“I give”* might be indefinite as to time, the general bearing of this history shows that he was not describing his usual practice formerly, but his solemn public act of appropriation at the present time, and, in connection with that, his resolution for the future: *“The half of my goods I give”*—I now give, in my mind, I devote and make over at this moment, and I will forthwith actually give, *“to the poor.”* Neither is he in this, and what follows, to be considered as guilty of self-righteous boasting; but he is to be viewed as humbly confessing his past deficiencies and transgressions, and firmly, though modestly, stating the change he had undergone, and the consequent decision to which he had come. Of the two great practical results of his saving change which he mentioned, the one was, that he had become very charitable—that he gave one-half of his great wealth to the poor: this was great liberality indeed. The law of Moses required (what it is to

be feared too many among us, even when there is no great burden on them of any other kind, would grudge very much) that one tithe, and then a tithe of the remainder, or nearly one-fifth in all, should be given to pious and charitable purposes; but Zaccheus gave one-half. Surely, if being rich in good works,\* ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, be evidence, in connection with other circumstances, that a rich man is trusting in the living God, and laying hold on eternal life, that evidence was very strong here.

But there is still another proof of this in what is subjoined: "*And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*" Tax-gatherers set over the Jews by a foreign power, and farming, for a fixed sum, the public revenues, which they had then to raise for their own benefit, were under temptation, and were sometimes given to demand more than was legally due, and then, if any resistance was made by any of the people to the demand, to accuse them of disobedience to the law, and thus obtain the aid of the military to enforce their requisitions. Hence the Baptist thus exhorted the publicans who came to hear him, and to be baptized, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Zaccheus said, "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, or, "If I have wronged any man in aught," for the word† is of very extensive application. He stated the case hypothetically, which, however, appears to have had some foundation in fact; and he declared that his rule now was to make ample restitution, even "fourfold." This was what the law of Moses required in very bad cases, where what was taken unjustly was recovered by compulsion on legal prosecution; whereas, when restitution was voluntary, as in the case of Zaccheus, that law required only restitution of equal value, with the addition of one-fifth, and a trespass-offering.‡ On similar principles, the Roman law of taxes required oppressive tax-gatherers to restore, on conviction, four times as much, in the worst cases, as they had unjustly taken, and twice as much in ordinary cases; but, when they restored voluntarily, it was contented with simple restitution.§ This

\* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

† *Ἐκκαθάρισται*. For the derivation and shades of meaning of this word, see Potter's *Antiquities*, page 127, Boyd's edition, Glasg. 1839; Stockius, Schleusner, and Campbell's *Dissert.* xii. part i. § 16.

‡ Exod. xxii. 1, and Lev. vi. 5. The ox was rated highest because of the value of his labour. Prov. xiv. 4.

§ See Doddridge *in locum*.

very ample restitution showed the sincerity and depth of this publican's repentance. It is true that a principle of common honesty may be enough to lead to restitution; but when it is made at the time a man is professedly yielding to religion, and becoming exemplary in other respects, it is one of the most satisfactory proofs of sincerity.

When Zaccheus had made this frank declaration, "*Jesus said unto him:*" so the clause is in our version. But our Lord, in what is subjoined, evidently addresses himself to the people who were present, and speaks of Zaccheus in the third person. The original words, however,\* rendered "unto him," are capable of being rendered, and should be here rendered, "of," or "concerning," or "with regard to him." Jesus said concerning him, "*This day is salvation come to this house.*" This implied that there was no salvation, that is, no person in a state of salvation, in that house before, but that then the master of the house was converted and saved. It did not mean that every member of the family was converted, but, while it expressly asserted that Zaccheus himself was saved, it implied that he would endeavour to promote the salvation of them all, and it justifies a hope that his pious endeavours were not without success. Though there is far from being a necessary and invariable connection, there is frequently a very happy connection, between the faith and piety of the head of a family and those of its members. Paul and Silas said to the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house:" "and he was baptized, he and all his, straightway." The master of a family is, in a certain sense, its representative; so that, when he becomes a Christian, his family may, in a general sense, be called a Christian family. Such a man, however, knowing that much more than this is necessary, will do all he can to bring his whole family to God, according to Joshua's good resolution: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and such a man, studying to do good, and, like David, imploring in his prayers a blessing from God, often becomes a great blessing to his household.

"Salvation is come to this house, *forasmuch as,*" or since, "*he also is a son of Abraham.*" This declared him to be a Jew, or a descendant of Abraham, which, indeed, might have been inferred from his name; for, Zaccheus is the same

\* *ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ*. See how *ὑπὲρ* is rendered Luke xx. 19, and Heb. i. 7,

with Zaccai, which occurs in Ezra and Nehemiah,\* and signifies "pure," or "just." Now, according to the very prejudices of these people in favour of their own nation, this circumstance should have prevented their murmuring. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosed from this bond?" said our Lord.† These words, however, declared Zaccheus to be a son of Abraham in a far more important, that is, in a saving sense. When certain Jews said, "Abraham is our father, Jesus said unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." "They are not all Israel who are of Israel," saith Paul; "neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children."—"Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe."—"Know ye, therefore, that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." What a privilege to be, in this sense, children of Abraham! for, those who are so, are children of God; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." And how happy was Zaccheus in being thus designated a son of Abraham by Him who could not err!

Our Lord adds, in conclusion, "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" Notwithstanding all their murmurings, Christ defended his conduct in this case, and expressed his satisfaction with its result, as exactly answering the gracious purpose for which he had come into the world. Zaccheus, like every other mere man, was lost, in the spiritual sense—that is, was in a state of condemnation and depravity; and, if he was a sinner above others, he was, therefore, more eminently a fit object of a Saviour's solicitude. But his being a Jew brought him within the circle of the more immediate and early ministration of the gospel, according to Christ's declaration with regard to himself, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and his direction to the apostles, "Go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." What Jesus did, therefore, in this particular instance, was altogether becoming and gracious. In connection with this, it should always be remembered, for universal encouragement and admonition, that the chief object for which he is held forth in the Gospel, is to recover those who are wandering in the way to everlasting destruction; that he came to save

\* Ezra ii. 9; Neh. vii. 14.

† Luke xiii. 16.

even the chief of sinners; that all opposition to this truth in its theory, or its practical application, arises from pharisaical pride; and that, instead of blaming, or endeavouring to thwart, we should employ, or encourage the employment of all scriptural means for the salvation of perishing men of every description, and of every degree of spiritual degradation.

From this passage of sacred history, I would address to you three exhortations.

1. *Let the desire of all of you, in coming up to the house of God, be, like that of Zaccheus, to see Jesus.* "Heaven," it is true, "must receive him until the times of restitution of all things," and he is not to be seen any more personally on earth till he come at the last day; but you may see him, and should earnestly desire to see him, by knowledge and faith, in the glories of his person, character, and redemption. If you obtain a sight of him, and come to know who he is, in this way, you will be like Abraham, who "rejoiced," or greatly desired, "to see his day, and saw it, and was glad:" and the words will then be applicable to you, in their best sense, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," "blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." If you have not seen him thus, and have no desire to see him, remember that the time is approaching when you must see him, whether you will or not. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." He is now saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Endeavour, then, to get as near to him as possible; and make every exertion to obtain a full view of him. Come and look at him with eager desire, now that he is thus passing by. If you do so, you may expect that he will look compassionately and powerfully on you, as he did on Zaccheus; and then, in reference to what he has done for you, he may be considered as saying to each of you, "No eye pitied thee, to have compassion on thee. But when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love." If you have obtained a saving sight of Christ already, it is well. To many, even when they do see him in a certain sense, "he hath no form nor comeliness, no beauty that they should desire him;" but you have "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten

of the Father, full of grace and truth." Though you have seen him, however, already, you have not yet seen all that is to be seen about him. View him again and again, and new beauties and new glories will continually open up to your minds. Continue "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." Look to him to the last; and then you shall "depart in peace, your eyes having seen his salvation;" "and when he shall appear, you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is."

2. *See that those of you who profess to be Christians give the same evidences of conversion as Zaccheus.* Remember that repentance is to be judged of, not so much by its terror at the time, as by its permanent effects on the heart and life. You must, like Zaccheus, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." On the two first proofs of his conversion, in the readiness with which he obeyed Christ's call, and the joyfulness with which he received him into his house, it is, perhaps, unnecessary to say more; but his example in the two other respects must now be pressed on your conscientious regard.

If you are, indeed, to evidence faith, and repentance, and true Christian principle, you must consider yourselves merely as stewards of whatever providential bounties God has conferred on you; and, according as he has prospered you, you must devote, we say not what exact proportion, but a very considerable proportion, of your substance to purposes of temporal and spiritual benevolence. To this you are called by scriptural precept and example. On the subject of charity, the apostle writes to the Corinthians: As ye abound in every thing, "see that ye abound in this grace also." And we know that after the great success of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, none of the brethren were left in want, but "distribution was made to every man, according as he had need."\* If professing Christians, who are prosperous according to their station, and not otherwise subjected to heavy calls, were to give, we say not a half, but a fifth, or even a tenth part of their income in this way—if anything like a distant approach to the liberality of Zaccheus were common amongst us, every judicious work of piety and charity would be fully accomplished, in so far as pecuniary means could accomplish it.

But the remaining trait in the character of Zaccheus after his conversion has even a prior claim on our attention—

\* 2 Cor. viii. 7; Acts ii. 44, iv. 35.

namely, restitution; for we must be just before we can be properly generous. It is clearly incumbent to be careful, from the first, to avoid injustice, and it is well when a man's case is like that of Samuel: "Behold, here I am," said he; "witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand." But if any wrong has been done, whether knowingly at the time, in which case the guilt of the action is obvious, or unintentionally, and the mistake be discovered afterwards, let full restitution be made. Unless this be made, as far as is practicable, there can be no forgiveness, and no salvation, because there is plainly neither faith nor repentance: for, if there were faith, it would show itself in this way by its works; and if there were repentance, it would prompt to relieve the conscience by the renunciation of the unrighteous gain. There is, however, an express promise of forgiveness on restitution. "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."\* The circumstance, moreover, of the law requiring a trespass-offering, as well as restitution, reminds us that where there is any sin contracted, in such cases, the return to justice to man must, in order to pardon, be accompanied by an application to God in the way of faith in the atonement of Christ. It should also be remembered that the same rule of restitution, or of remedying the evil as far as possible, should be followed, when an injury has been done by positive acts, or neglect of duty, in any way, though it may not relate to property. The application of the rule, however, to pecuniary matters, is most plain. Let every person deal faithfully with himself; and wherever any restitution is called for, let it be made without delay.

In the last place, *Consider well, and improve, this declaration of the gracious purpose for which the Son of man came into the world, namely, to save the lost.* What an affecting description is this of every mere human being, "That which is lost!" Naturally, we are all lost, as having wandered

\* Ezek. xxxiii. 15.

away from God by sin: we have "gone astray like lost sheep." We are lost, as depraved and helpless. We are lost, as a criminal who is condemned to death. We are "by nature children of wrath." We are lost to virtue, to happiness, and to God. But, if we wish to have the most impressive view of what it is to be lost, we must think of the state of those who are in hell and consigned to misery unmixed, uninterrupted, and eternal, and then reflect that unbelievers are ripening for that state, condemned to it, and actually on the way to it. How dreadful! And yet they are not irrecoverably lost; there is hope for them, for, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The Son of man, who is also the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us, has come for the very purpose of saving those who are thus far lost; and the worst of them may be saved through him. He has come to save by merit—by the merit of his perfect obedience and atoning death; and, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." He has come to save by power—by the power of his Holy Spirit. He has come to *seek*, as well as to save, or to seek, in order to save, the lost. If he had not provided efficacious means for recovering sinners, none of them would ever have found their way back, none of them would have returned to God, but they would all have continued to wander farther and farther off from him for ever. Blessed be his name for the means he has provided, in his ordinances and his grace, for bringing his lost sheep into his fold at first, and also for bringing them back again when they stray! "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out," and "will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."—"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."

By those of you who are found of him, and saved and called with a holy calling, let the liveliest gratitude be cherished in your hearts, and manifested in your lives. And let those of you who are in a lost condition, sensible of its misery and danger, and encouraged by this plain declaration of the gracious purpose for which the Son of God came into the world, and for which he is preached to you, yield yourselves up to him now that he is thus in search of you, and he will lead you to a place of safety.



## LECTURE C.

## LUKE XIX. 11-27.

“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds). 26. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

THIS is the parable of the ten pounds; and it is found only in Luke, though another parable similar to it—namely, that of the talents—is related by Matthew, in his 25th chapter, as having been spoken by our Lord after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The passage under consideration comes in after the account of what took place in the house of Zaccheus; and, if we are to understand the clause, “*as they heard these things,*” very rigidly as to the time, then we

must suppose that this parable was spoken by Christ immediately after what he said of his having "come to seek and to save that which was lost," and even before he left the house: and then, too, as it is also said that he spoke the parable when "*he was nigh to Jerusalem*," we must suppose that Luke speaks comparatively with other places at a greater distance, from which Jesus had lately come. Some critics, however, judging that it would have been unnatural for the historian to speak of Christ as being nigh to Jerusalem if he was still in or near Jericho, which was about twenty miles distant from it, suppose that this parable was spoken by Christ the day after he had been in the house of Zaccheus, and when he had accomplished the greater part of his journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, the clause, "as they heard these things," being, of course, to be understood with some latitude.\*

Our Lord, "*added and spake*," or proceeded to speak this parable, "*because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*." Not only did the great body of the Jewish people and their rulers expect that Messiah, when he should come (for they would not allow that Jesus was he), would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and raise them to a high pitch of power and splendour among the nations of the earth, but the disciples themselves, as we have frequent occasion to notice, though they acknowledged Jesus as Messiah, laboured for a long time under the same mistake as to the nature of his kingdom; and now it appears, that when he was approaching Jerusalem, they imagined that as soon as he should enter the city he would declare himself king, and assume the government, in the common acceptation of the words. Because they entertained this idea, he spake a parable which was admirably adapted to undeceive them, inasmuch as it taught that, instead of remaining much longer on earth, either to reign or to do anything else, he was soon to leave it, and then, at the appointed time, to return to rule, and to reckon, both with his friends and enemies, in a very different way from what even his friends then supposed. Let us consider the parable, first, in its literal meaning, and then in its figurative application.

\* Dr Adam Clarke says, "I believe the participle of the present tense here is used for the participle of the past, or rather, that the participle of the present conveys sometimes the sense of the past." Dr Campbell translates the clause simply, "As the people were attentive."

A flood of light is thrown on *the literal meaning* of the parable, and the mode of representation adopted in it is accounted for, by the way in which, in those days, the government in most of the nations was obtained and held. The Romans had conquered the greater part of the then known world, and the rulers held power under the Roman emperor and senate. Even after great men, by hereditary claims, or personal weight, or popular favour, had obtained an influence sufficient to raise them to the government, they did not reckon themselves secure in it, nor indeed, generally speaking, would they formally assume it, till they obtained the express consent and appointment of the supreme power at Rome. Commission to this effect was sometimes sent to them; but they often had to repair personally all the way to Rome to obtain it. Thus, Josephus relates how Herod, that is, Herod the Great, went up to Rome for this purpose, and had his cause espoused by Mark Antony and Cæsar himself. "So a senate was convoked," says the Jewish historian; "and Messala first, and then Atratinus, introduced Herod to it, and enlarged upon the benefits they had received from his father, and put them in mind of the good-will he had borne to the Romans." "Antony informed them farther, that it was for their advantage," "that Herod should be king. This seemed good to all the senators; and so they made a decree accordingly." "When the senate was dissolved, Antony and Cæsar went out of the senate-house with Herod between them, and with the consuls and other magistrates before them, in order to offer sacrifices, and to lay up their decrees in the capitol." And thus did this man "*receive the kingdom.*" Then he returned from Italy to Judea, to assert the government. The same historian relates, at considerable length, how, on the death of Herod the Great, his son Archelaus proceeded to Rome, in order to prevail with Augustus to confirm his father's will in his favour, but how Herod Antipas, another son of Herod the Great, "sailed to Rome at the same time, *in order to gain the government;*" and how, after hearing the pleadings of the parties, the emperor "appointed Archelaus ethnarch of one half" of the territories which had been governed by his father, "and promised to give him the royal dignity afterwards, if he governed well;" and divided the other half between Herod Antipas, and Philip, another brother.\* After this illustration from the history of the times, nothing need be added

\* Josephus, Ant. lib. xiv. 14, xvii. 9, 10, 11. Whiston's translation.

to open up the literal meaning of the supposition here made in the 12th verse, or to show its naturalness. "*A certain nobleman,*" or man of high birth, "*went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom*"—royalty, or kingly power—"and to return."

Were a nobleman leaving his own country for some time, with this view, there would be two classes of persons with whom he would be concerned, and with whom he would intend to reckon on his return. There would be, in the first place, his servants, those who were in his own personal, private employment, over whom he would justly consider himself as having authority, whatever might be the result of his journey; and there would be, in the second place, his citizens, or the inhabitants of the city, or country in general, over whom also he would have authority, on the supposition of his returning with kingly power. Accordingly, the remainder, or the great body of this parable, just describes the way in which he who left the country as a nobleman, and returned as its king, dealt with these two classes. All the remaining verses, with the exception of two, namely the 14th and 27th, relate to the mode of his employing and reckoning with his servants.

The nobleman, before he set out on his journey, "*called his ten servants,*" or perhaps, rather, ten of his servants, "*and delivered them ten pounds;*" that is, gave one pound to each of them. The sum of money here meant by no means corresponded with our pound, and the exact value of it is a matter of dispute; it would therefore have been better to have used in the translation the original word, or one formed on it. The "*mina,*" or "*maneh*" (Ezek. xlv. 12), was not a coin, but a particular weight, which, in money, was either in gold or silver; and there was a larger and a smaller mina, while even these seem not to have been always respectively the same. Supposing the "*mina*" of silver to be intended in this parable, it has been variously estimated at from three pounds two shillings and sixpence to nine pounds sterling money. A "*mina*" of gold would, of course, be proportionally of much greater value.\* Having delivered to each of these servants a pound, or "*mina,*" he said to them, "*Occupy,*" trade, or do business, "*till I come.*" He

\* For more full information on this subject, which is perplexingly involved, the following authors may be consulted. Calmet on *Weights and Mina*. Arbuthnot's *Tables*. Prideaux, *Preface*, and on *Shekel, Mina, Talent*, as by *Index*. Dr Campbell's *Dissert.* VIII. i. 7.

directed them to lay out the money in the best way they could, for improvement during his absence, and intimated that, on his return, he would settle accounts with them, and expect some increase. All servants, and especially those who have their employer's money, or goods, or business intrusted to them, are bound, by reason and religion, to take an interest in the prosperity of his affairs, and faithfully and diligently to do all they can, consistently with justice to others, to promote it. They should study to be like Onesimus after his conversion, who, though he was "in time past unprofitable," then became "profitable" to his master, Philemon.

Omitting, for the present, the 14th verse, which, except in the order of time, is naturally connected with the last verse of the passage, let us proceed to consider the result, in so far as the servants were concerned. The way in which that result is stated is too plain and full to require much explanation. "*And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom:*" the nobleman, having succeeded in his application to the foreign supreme government to which his own country owed fealty, and having returned invested with regal dignity and power, the first thing he did was to reckon with his own private servants. "*Then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.*" The description does not extend to the transactions of all the ten servants; but it includes those of three of them, and may be considered as a specimen of the rest, and as an illustration of the principle on which the nobleman, now a king, would examine and deal with them all. The servant who had been most successful, came forward first, saying, "*Lord,*" or, as we should rather say, My Lord, or, Sir, "*thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*" This man must have employed his pound in purchasing, and then exchanging, or selling goods, or in some such traffic; for it was impossible that it could have gained any thing like so much during his master's absence, at any reasonable rate of interest at which it could have been lent. Such success, on the part of this servant, was very satisfactory to his master. He, accordingly, commended him highly, saying unto him, "*Well,*" or, well done, "*thou good servant.*" Besides, having now the government of the country in his hands, he had it in his power to reward him substantially and amply, and resolved to

do so, by appointing him to a place of great honour and emolument. He said to him, with the word of a king, which, as soon as it is spoken, is authoritative and effectual, "*Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*"

"*And the second*" servant "*came, saying, Lord,*" or My Lord, or Sir, "*thy pound hath gained five pounds.*" This, too, though only half of the former, was a good increase. His lord, therefore, was well pleased with this man's conduct also, "*and he said likewise unto him, Be thou also over five cities.*" Two remarks occur on a comparison of these two cases. First, the reward was in proportion to the improvement each of the servants had made—he who gained ten pounds, received ten cities; and he who gained five pounds, received five cities. Secondly, in both cases, the reward was a reward of grace, bestowed on good, it is true, but humble servants. Neither of them vainly boasted of his own management, or took the credit of his success to himself—neither of them said, "*I have gained,*" but the language of them both was, "*Thy pound hath gained;*" attributing the result to the confidence reposed in them by their master, who had put it in their power to act as they had done. Such being their spirit, they would certainly regard the great reward which he bestowed on them, not as payment of what they could demand as a debt, or purchased by merit, but as what it really was, a signal display of his favour, calling for their deepest gratitude.

The third case is of a very different complexion. "*And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.*" How false this view of his master's character, as a hard man, exacting what he had not given, and requiring improvement where he had not furnished the means! for, had he not intrusted this servant with a pound as well as the rest? Terror, however, and sloth united, had paralyzed this man's mind, so that he did nothing. It was vain for him to imagine that his master would be satisfied with the single pound, or with any such excuse whatever. Such slothfulness was positively unjust, as it was eating the bread of idleness at his master's expense, or receiving his maintenance from him, while he did nothing for it; it was also directly contrary to his master's express command, "*Occupy till I come.*"

When his master heard this, he said unto him, "*Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.*" It is, for the most part, useless to reason with people on premises which they themselves do not acknowledge; it is, indeed, scarcely to be expected that those who proceed on inconsistent premises should arrive at the same conclusion, and it is but seldom that a man comes to see, in the course of their application, the justness of premises which he altogether rejects from the first. But when a man is taken on his own principles, there is at least sufficient ground to stop his mouth, and there is a probability of convincing him of his error, if he be not quite steeled against conviction. Indeed, some of the best and most effectual argumentative treatises which have ever been written, have been composed expressly on this plan. As to practical transgressors, it often happens that, in their attempts to defend themselves, they say what is abundantly sufficient to convict them. When the Amalekite\* brought tidings of Saul's death, and pretended that he himself had killed him, David ordered him to be instantly slain, saying, "Thy blood be upon thy head: for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed." Eliphaz said to Job, not justly, however, "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee;" and Job himself said, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." The "wicked servant" (for so he is called because of his unprofitableness) had said quite enough to convict himself; for, he had not only plainly confessed his slothfulness, but had expressed such views of his master's character as ought to have stirred him up to do what he could for his interest: and it is on this latter ground chiefly that his master takes him up.

"*Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. Wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required,*" or received, "*mine own with usury?*" In this, we are obviously to consider the master, not as confessing that he was the hard and unreasonable man represented, but as taking the wicked servant on his own principles, and showing that, even on them, he ought to have acted differently. It is as if he had said, "Thou sayest that thou knewest me to be a hard man; be it so, for

\* 2 Sam. i. 16.

the sake of argument: but, if I really be so austere as thou basely sayest, then thou oughtst to have been peculiarly anxious to be faithful to the charge I intrusted to thee; and, if thou wast afraid to employ my money in hazardous speculations, or any kind of trade, lest it should be lost, thou shouldst, at least, have lodged it where I might have received interest for it."

It is proper to remark, that the English word "usury," like many other words, has come to have a different meaning from what it had originally. Its original meaning was simply that which is now conveyed by the word *interest*, without reference to any excessive rate; that is, money paid or received for the use of money. But the word "usury" has gradually increased in intensity of meaning, till it has come to signify exorbitant and oppressive interest—such a rate of interest as is held to be illegal. There are some parts of Scripture in which "usury," or taking of interest, is spoken of in such a way that some persons of over-scrupulous conscience have been disposed to reckon it sinful to take any interest for money, or any allowance for the use of any articles in any case. Thus, to the question, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle," or "dwell in thy holy hill?" the Psalmist answers,\* "He that putteth not out his money to usury;" and it is written in Ezekiel,† "He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase," "he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." But these passages do not countenance so extreme and unreasonable a view of the subject. An interpretation so rigid is beyond even what the Jewish law required. That law is found in Deut. xxiii. 19, 20: "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury, but unto thy brother thou mayest not lend upon usury; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it. Other passages can, of course, only forbid what is contrary to this law. The Jew, then, was forbidden by this law to take interest for anything he lent to any person of his own nation. When it is considered that many of the institutions of the Jews were appointed for the express purpose of keeping them a distinct people, that the different tribes and families had the land divided among them by portions which could not be alie-

\* Ps. xv.

† Ezek. xviii. 8.



nated, and that they were not extensively engaged in trade, it will be obvious that this particular clause of their law, regarding the lending of money, was in accordance with the spirit of their other laws—that it was introduced for reasons peculiar to that nation, and so is not applicable to any other—and that, in their circumstances, its observance would neither be difficult nor productive of much inconvenience, but would be highly useful. From their being at liberty, however, to take interest from strangers, or those of other nations, when yet they were commanded “not to vex or oppress them,”\* as well as from the way in which it is spoken of in this parable, it is certain that there is nothing sinful in the custom of taking interest, provided it be not practised in an oppressive way towards the poor, or to an avaricious and exorbitant degree towards any.—Though there were no regular and splendid institutions like our banks in ancient times, the original word,† which strictly signifies a “table,” is well rendered “bank” in this place, because we have nothing else which comes so near the idea to be expressed. We read elsewhere of the tables of the “money-changers.”‡ These men dealt in exchanging different kinds of coin, and in borrowing and lending money.

As a farther proof of his displeasure with the slothful servant, the master “*said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.*” This seems to imply that the master generously gave the diligent servant what he had gained to himself. “*And they said,*” perhaps solely with the view of pointing out the person, or, perhaps, with surprise that more was to be given to one who had so much already, “*Lord, he hath ten pounds.*” Jesus then pronounced that rule of universal application which he had laid down before,§ and which he repeated again in the parable of the talents: “*For I say unto you, That unto every one who hath,*” that is, in reference to what immediately goes before, unto every one who hath gain or increase, who hath improved his advantages, “*shall be given,*” that is, rewards and still greater advantages shall be given; “*and from him that hath not,*” that is, who hath not increase, or hath not improved, “*even that he hath,*” or the advantages he hath, “*shall be taken away from him.*” When a master sees a servant doing well, he will both reward him and trust him still farther; but when he sees a

\* Exod. xxii. 21.

† *Τραπεζα.*

‡ Matt. xxi. 12.

§ Luke viii. 18; Matt. xxv. 29.

servant negligent and useless, he will withdraw from him his countenance and favour, and dismiss him from his employment. So much for what relates to the servants.

The literal meaning of the parable, in so far as it relates to the *citizens*, or inhabitants in general, is so plain as hardly to require a single comment. Verse 14th, "*But his citizens hated him, and sent a message,*" or rather an embassy, "*after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.*" What sometimes happened in the political history of the nations is represented as having occurred in this case, namely, that a strong party of the inhabitants, when they understood that the nobleman was gone to the seat of supreme government, in order to apply for regal power over them, despatched an embassy after him, to protest against, and to do everything in their power to prevent his appointment. They would also do their utmost to undermine his interest, and to thwart his views at home. But their opposition was vain. He returned invested with regal dignity; and, having his enemies completely in his power, he proceeded to pass against those of them who persevered in rebellion, a sentence of condemnation which would be immediately executed. Verse 27. "*But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*"

It remains to consider, secondly, *the spiritual application and improvement* of this parable. In this view it is rich in meaning—full of awakening suggestions.

The nobleman is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And who has so good a claim to the title? It is, indeed, below what is due to him. He is of the noble, or rather the royal line of David—the son of David, nay, the Son of God. "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." By his services rendered to men during his abode on earth, he had earned a right to reign over them; but he had not taken on himself the government in any formal, conspicuous, general manner. The nobleman's journey is Christ's leaving the world at his ascension; and the far country into which he went is heaven. He went thither to receive the kingdom, to be solemnly invested with the sovereignty of the Church and of the world. God "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and

hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The government is upon his shoulder. "There is given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Already has he a right to reign universally, and already does he actually reign partially, by the authority of his name, and the power of his grace. The time is coming, however, when all men shall own his sway. And, when time shall be at an end, he will visibly return to the earth. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

The servants, in this parable, are all who profess to be the followers of Christ, among whom *we* are to be ranked. As each of the servants was intrusted with a pound, and then directed to "occupy," or trade; so, we have valuable advantages bestowed on us, of which we are bound to make improvement. Has God given us life? let us live to his glory. Has he given us bodily strength? let us exert it for him. Has he given us reason? let us employ it on what is useful, and in the contemplation of its author. Has he given us property? let us honour him with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase. Has he given us providential calls? let us obey them. Has he given us the means of grace? let us diligently use them. Has he given us the Scriptures? let us search them—the Sabbath? let us keep it holy—the ministry? let us make full proof of it, or value it, and yield to it. Has he given us convictions of conscience? let us follow them up. Has he given us spiritual gifts and graces? let us remember that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Has he given us opportunities of active service and usefulness? let us embrace them, and work with all our might. And let us persevere in this conduct till Christ come—till he return to us, or call us to him. Let us improve all for our own souls' salvation, for the benefit of our brethren, and for the honour of our Master. "As every one hath received the gift, even so let us minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Again, if we have made any improvement, we are here

taught to be humble. "Thy pound hath gained" is the sentiment which becomes us. Let us give God all the praise, for we have all of him. Let us resemble David, who said, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee;" and the Apostle Paul, who said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Hence, when we have respect to the recompense of reward, it must be as of grace, and not of debt.

We are farther taught here, that the Christian's reward will be in proportion to the improvement he has made. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Knowing this, let us be encouraged to improve our advantages to the utmost. Let us "be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The case of the slothful servant teaches the insufficiency of what is called negative goodness. As it was not enough that he had not embezzled or wasted the pound, so it will not be enough that we do not become altogether profligate, nay, that we continue decent and harmless, if this be, strictly speaking, possible without true religion. If we are to be safe, we must become positively religious—we must not remain as we are by nature, but must be improved, or rather entirely changed. We must believe and obey the gospel—we must become truly pious and holy—we must glorify God by doing good. If we do not, our advantages will either be taken away from us, or turned into curses. Nay, we shall be positively and severely punished. The barren fig-tree was cut down as a cumberer of the ground; and, in the close of the parable of the talents, we find the awful words, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Vain will be the every excuse which we may attempt to plead in arrest of that fearful doom. Our very pleas will furnish ground to condemn us. Let us beware of laying the blame of our sins on God, and of the blasphemy of accusing him as a hard master. He is not like Pharaoh and the task-masters, who required bricks without straw. He has actually bestowed on us many privileges. He requires nothing but what we might do, were it not for our own depravity; and, as it is, he requires nothing but what he is ready to give us strength to perform, if we apply to

him for it. Let us beware, too, of slavish fear, of that fear which is not godly, but wicked, and which, instead of prompting us to seek God, would frighten us away from him. "I feared thee," said the wicked servant: and we are told that "the devils believe and tremble." Even persons who are, on the whole, pious and active, suffer some loss when this spirit partially prevails in them: thus, servile fear made David delay, for a time, to bring home the ark to his own Zion, for we read,\* "David was afraid of the Lord that day," the day of the breach made on Uzzah, "and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" Let us seek that "perfect love which casteth out" such "fear," remembering that true Christians "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but they have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father." If we obtain this spirit we shall diligently improve our advantages, and cheerfully serve the Lord here; and hereafter we shall have the commendatory words addressed to us, "Well done, good and faithful servants: enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

As to the spiritual application of that part of the parable which relates to the citizens or inhabitants in general, this points more immediately to the unbelieving Jews, but also to all unbelievers. The great majority of the Jews, who were Christ's own countrymen, rejected and crucified him, when he was visibly in the midst of them; and, after he was gone, they continued virulently to oppose his cause and his adherents. In a word, they were his enemies, and hated him. In the public and solemn manner in which they resisted him, and passed resolutions against Christianity, they might be figuratively represented as sending an embassy after him, to oppose his advancement to the kingdom. "Now," said he, "have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."—"They denied the holy One and the Just." They said, "We have no king but Cæsar." In the words of the disciples, "Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." These opposing and rebellious Jews did not pass unpunished for this national crime; for Christ returned, in providential judgments, at the destruction of Jerusalem, when unparalleled multitudes of them were

\* 2 Sam. vi. 9.

slain by the sword of the Romans. He would also punish them individually in the other world.

But this part of the parable is also applicable to all unbelievers of every age and nation—to all who reject the gospel—to all who will not trust in Christ's name, and obey his commandments. All such persons, in a more or less daring manner, do really say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." However some of them may attempt to disguise it, they are his enemies, and they hate him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The feeling of the unrenewed heart is a feeling of aversion, prompting to overt acts of resistance and rebellion. Jehovah, however, will "vex," and break in pieces those who resist the King whom he hath anointed, and set on the holy hill of Zion. Let it be indelibly impressed on our minds, and habitually present to our thoughts, that, unless in our own case this enmity pass into friendship, this hatred into love, this resistance into submission, we shall perish in the fierceness of his indignation. How thankful ought we to be for the divinely appointed method of removing this enmity, through the belief of the gospel of the grace of God! When sinners are brought to know and believe the Saviour's love to them, their dislike to him can no longer stand its ground. "When we were enemies," says the apostle, "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Lord, grant that, in this way, the opposition in our hearts may be overthrown, and our every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Lord, grant that where all is hatred and rebellion, the new heart of love and submission may be given; and that where regeneration has already taken place, every, the least remaining feeling of resistance may be utterly eradicated. Instead of any more saying, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" let the language of our hearts, and lips, and lives be, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." Thus, our glorious King, when he comes to us, or calls us to him, instead of ordering us out to be punished, will cause us (astounding thought!) to be crowned in his presence; and will take us to sit with him on his throne, and to reign with him for ever.

## LECTURE CI.

## LUKE XIX. 28-40.

"And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. 31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

We formerly considered how, having left Jericho and the house of Zaccheus, and having proceeded so far on the way to Jerusalem as to be "nigh" to it, our Lord, in order to dispel the delusive expectation that he was to assume a temporal kingdom, and that, too, immediately on his arrival at the capital, spoke the parable of the ten pounds, in which he taught that, instead of remaining long on earth, for any purpose whatever, he was soon to leave it, and afterwards to return to reign, and to reckon both with his servants and with his enemies, in a different manner from what their carnal views led them to suppose. In immediate connection with this, it is said in the first verse of the passage now under consideration, "*And when he had thus spoken he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.*" We found that at an earlier stage of this journey, and before he reached Jericho,\*

\* Mark x. 32.

“as they” (the disciples) “were in the way going up to Jerusalem, Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.” Nor does his courage fail now that they are near the city, and within sight of its battlements. Well knowing what awaited him there, he advanced in the front of them all, with the noblest resolution and devotedness, having a baptism of suffering and of blood to be baptized with, and being greatly straitened till it should be accomplished. Let us admire the zeal and love he thus manifested for us; and let us, in our measure, and according to the calls that are made on us, go forward, with similar courage and cheerfulness, to act and suffer for his sake.

Though it was impossible for one who spoke and acted as Jesus did not to attract very general notice, he had hitherto shunned publicity, and retired when the rage of his enemies threatened his life. Now, however, the time was come when he was to be made perfect through suffering, and exalted through the deepest humiliation; and the more generally the public attention was drawn towards him, the better for the diffusion of the knowledge of his history and character, and for the subsequent success of his cause. For this reason, therefore, as well as for the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, he resolved to make what is commonly called his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Of this important event an account is given by all the four evangelists. Our Lord, however, did not enter Jerusalem immediately, and on the very day he accomplished this journey; but he stopped for the night in Bethany, which was in its immediate neighbourhood, and made his entry into the capital the day after. This appears from the history as given by John in his 12th chapter. In the 1st verse of that chapter, he says, “Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom he had raised from the dead;” and then John states, in the 12th verse, that our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem took place “on the next day.”

Now that the history of redemption is drawing towards its crisis, we find dates and other circumstances recorded with increasing distinctness and particularity; and to mark these with as much accuracy as the harmony of the inspired authors enables us to reach, ought to be as interesting and edifying, as it is dutiful and becoming. We are now come to what is commonly called the Passion week; that is, the



week of Christ's sufferings unto death. And what a week was this! what a week for the spiritual welfare and eternal salvation of men! its events how numerous, and yet how interesting! how tragical, and yet how glorious! Even after carefully perusing the histories of the evangelists, and several commentators, considerable difficulties present themselves to many readers as to the proper arrangement of these events, and the days on which they occurred. The following is the substance of the conclusions to which, whether they be all absolutely certain or not, I have come, after much reading and careful reflection. First of all, some of the difficulties arise from not properly distinguishing the different meanings which may be scripturally attached to the words "day" and "passover," and the way of reckoning them. The word day is sometimes used as distinguished from night, and sometimes for the period of twenty-four hours; and it is evidently not in the former, but in the latter sense we must understand it, when it is said, Jesus came to Bethany "six days before the passover." It is to be remembered, however, that the Jews reckoned their day, in this sense, not as we do, from midnight to midnight, nor, as some other nations, from sunrise to sunrise, but from sunset to sunset. The law\* ran thus, "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath;" and, of course, the other days of the week were counted in the same way. The passover, again, may signify the sacrificing and eating of the paschal lamb on the evening of the 14th day of the month, that is, when the 14th passed into the 15th; or it may signify the first day of twenty-four hours of the feast, which was from sunset of the 14th to sunset of the 15th, which first day, like the last of the feast, was a day of holy convocation; or it may signify the whole feast, which lasted a week, or seven full days, that is, from sunset of the 14th day of the month, to sunset of the 21st.

It may be proper to observe, that some writers erroneously say that Jesus Christ was crucified at the same moment that the paschal lamb was slain; this error betrays inconsideration or rashness of theory; for it is manifest that he partook of the paschal lamb himself. He was crucified, however, on the following day, which was called the first day of the feast. Now, it is acknowledged that he rose again from the dead on the first day of the week, which is hence the Christian Sabbath, and which is also called Sun-

\* Lev. xxiii. 32.

day; but, counting backwards to the third day before that; it is farther acknowledged that he suffered on the Friday. It is also, as already stated, certain that he ate the passover lamb the night before, and it is surely natural to suppose, that he did so at the season appointed for the whole nation by the law, which directed that the lamb should be killed in the evening, or towards the going down of the sun, on the 14th day of the first month of the ecclesiastical year. That month bore the name of Abib, but after the time of Ezra, and the return from the Babylonish captivity, was called Nisan, and it corresponded with part of our months of March and April. The lamb was also directed to be eaten the same night.\* Now, we have just read from John, that Jesus came to Bethany "six days before the passover." Some commentators of great respectability, understanding by the word "passover" here, the first day of the feast, or the Friday, the 15th of the month, and counting back from that six days, including both extremes, conclude that Christ came to Bethany on the first day of the week, which is now the Christian Sabbath, and entered Jerusalem in triumph on the Monday. Others, however, understanding by the word "passover," in John, the killing of the paschal lamb on the 14th day of the month, which was Thursday, and counting backwards from that six days, also including both extremes, conclude that the day on which John speaks of him as being at Bethany was the Jewish Sabbath, or our Saturday, and that the day on which he entered Jerusalem was the first day of the week, which is now the Christian Sabbath. This is the more commonly received reckoning of the two.† It was on this supposition that, when human inventions were multiplied, there was founded the observance of what was called Palm-Sunday, on which branches of palms were carried in commemoration of what took place on the occasion referred to. This reckoning, too, is thought by many good judges to harmonize better than the other with the account of the transactions of the days which intervened between this event and our Lord's death.

\* See Exod. xii.; Deut. xvi. 1-8. Dr Macknight has a long dissertation to prove that Christ anticipated the usual time of the passover by a day—an opinion held by many, but, I am persuaded, erroneously.

† See Lightfoot's Harmony; and Calmet and Stackhouse on the articles "Passover," and "Jesus Christ." Doddridge, on John xii. 1, 2, holds that Christ's "entrance into Jerusalem must have been on the first day of the week," and the entertainment given to him in the house of Simon, in Bethany, "on the evening of the day before, when the Jewish Sabbath was over." But Dr Adam Clarke adopts the other opinion.

But let us proceed with the history. "*And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples.*" Bethany was a considerable village situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, about fifteen furlongs,\* that is, nearly two miles, from Jerusalem. Bethphage was another smaller village in the same direction, somewhat nearer Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives lay to the east of the city, and was parted from it by the valley of Jehoshaphat, through which flowed the brook Kidron, or Cedron. As our Lord was now leaving Bethany, where he had lodged during the preceding night, it is thought that his coming nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, means his drawing near to the place where these villages met. From this spot he despatched two of his disciples on an errand, and he waited there till they returned. He sent them away, "*saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.*" In Matt. xxi. 2, it is mentioned that Jesus told them they would find an ass and a colt, and directed them to bring them both. The other three evangelists, however, mention only the colt, or foal, doubtless because it was on the colt; that Jesus rode. On that colt no man had ever sat. Here observe, that, according to the ceremonial law, and the commonly received opinion of most nations, those animals, if not the only ones which could be used in any case, were considered peculiarly fit and acceptable for sacred purposes, which had never been put to any labour, either in the yoke or in riding. The ordinance of "the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean," required the heifer to be a red one, "without spot, wherein was no blemish, and upon which never came yoke." In the expiation of the uncertain murder, the elders of the city nearest the spot where the body of the murdered man was found, were directed to take, for the purpose, "an heifer which had not been wrought with, and which had not drawn in the yoke." When the Philistines sent back the ark of God, they sent it "on a new cart," drawn by "two milch kine on which there had come no yoke:" and the men of Beth-shemesh "clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the Lord."† Many traces of a similar kind are found in heathen authors. Ovid's account of the origin of the city of Thebes, however

\* John xi. 18.

† Numb. xix. 2; Deut. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 7.

fabulous, shows the prevalence of this opinion. The wanderer, Cadmus, being at a loss where to settle, and having consulted the oracle of Apollo, was answered: "A heifer shall meet you in the lonely fields, that has borne no yoke, but has been free from the crooked plough; follow her, and wherever she lies down, there build your city." The account then proceeds to state how he saw "a heifer bearing on her neck no mark of servitude," and prosperously followed the direction given him.\* Virgil† speaks, in one place, of a sacrifice of "four heifers with untouched neck;" and, in another place, of a sacrifice of "seven bullocks from the untouched herd." With regard to the clause in the Jewish ceremonial law just mentioned (from which the idea prevalent with other nations was probably borrowed), it seems to have been intended to teach, in reference to human duty, that we should always serve the Lord with our best; and in reference to the great Antitype, that Jesus Christ never bore the yoke of sin till he stood forward freely, saying, "Lo, I come," and took it on him by imputation.

Christ, as God, being the supreme Lord of all, and having a right to do what he would with his own, directed the two disciples to proceed, without hesitation, to loose the colt, and to bring him to him. Anticipating, however, the opposition which would be made at the time, by those who were, in the ordinary sense, the owners of the colt, and careful that no ground should be given to unbelieving cavillers afterwards, to pretend that the act was dishonest, Jesus said, "*And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him:*" and Matthew and Mark mention that our Lord added, "and straightway he will send him (or them) hither." Observe here the illustrious title which Christ assumes—"The Lord." The best critics‡ are of opinion that the word Lord, used in this absolute way with the article, is peculiarly emphatical, and designates Christ as the Proprietor of all—in a word, is demonstrative of his Godhead. Observe, again, the expression, "The Lord hath need of him." In one sense the Lord has no need of men, or of their property, or services; for he is altogether independent on them, being rich in his own unsearchable riches, and strong in his own almighty strength, and able to accomplish his will

\* Ovid, Met. III. x. 16. "Bos tibi," &c.

† Georg. iv. 551; Aen. vi. 36. See also Iliad x. 291, and Odys. iii. 382.

‡ Middleton on the Greek article, and others.

without them. This is his true and lofty language: "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." In another sense, however, he has need of men and their property and services, namely, in so far as he has, of his own will, determined to employ them as instruments for the accomplishment of his purposes; in this sense, he needs, uses, and commands them. It is to be remembered, too, that the Son of God, by his humiliation, reduced himself to a state of need in the literal sense; for, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." He needed the colt at the time, too, for the purpose of his triumph, and for the fulfilment of prophecy. The addition, "and straightway he will send him hither," is commonly, and, I think, justly considered as an intimation by our Lord, that the owner, or owners, would consent to let them have the colt, it being understood that they meant only to borrow him for a short time.\*

In compliance with Christ's direction, "*they*" (the two disciples) "*that were sent, went their way, and found even as he had said unto them:*" or, supplying the circumstances from Matthew and Mark, "*they found the colt,*" with his dam, "*tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met.*" "*And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?*" expressing surprise and displeasure at their presuming to seize on property which they knew was not their own. "*And they*" (the two disciples) "*said, The Lord hath need of him;*" on which, as we are told by Mark, "certain of them that stood there," or the owners, "let them go," that is, allowed the disciples to take the colt with them. The owners were at least so far acquainted with the character of Christ, and so far satisfied with the explanation given, as to be persuaded that this permission was quite safe; and they may even have been so impressed by what they knew of him, as to have been glad of such an opportunity of testifying their re-

\* Some are of opinion that this clause should be considered as a continuation of what the two disciples were to say to the owners, and, therefore, expressing a promise that the colt was to be returned; and that it should be translated, "And straightway he (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) will send him back hither." But, though such a promise was implied, the word ἀποστέλλω cannot be justly rendered to send back.

gard for him.\* Whatever the Saviour condescends, as it were, to say that he needs of us, whatever he asks of us in the calls of his Word or providence, in the way of duty, whatever of our exertions or substance he requires for the good of his people, or the advancement of his cause, that let us give him, and let us think ourselves highly privileged and honoured in being permitted to do so.

A great variety of what men commonly call fortuitous circumstances, which mere human sagacity could not have conjectured, were here plainly foretold by our Lord, and all found to happen exactly as he had said. In all this, let us mark one of the many proofs of his divine foreknowledge. Let this lead us to reflect with pleasure that he still knows all things, and that whatever he says he will bring to pass; and let it encourage us to entertain full confidence that, in our own case, we shall find all his promises true and faithful.

Having thus obtained the permission of the owners to take the colt, and its dam also, the disciples, according to Luke, "*brought the colt to Jesus, and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.*" According to Matthew, they "brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon;"† that is, these two, or some of the disciples, taking off their mantles, or loose upper garments, laid one of them on each of the animals, giving Jesus the choice of the two: and he chose the colt. This action of putting their garments under him, was probably intended, not merely for his more comfortable riding, but also as an acknowledgment of him as king. When the captains of the host understood that Jehu was anointed king of Israel, "they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king."‡

Though Luke does not mention the circumstance of this being an accomplishment of ancient prophecy, it is proper for us to notice it here. "All this was done," says Matthew, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying"—and then he thus gives the substance of the prophecy in Zechariah, 9th chapter and 9th verse—"Tell ye the daughter of Zion" (so the city of Jerusalem is beau-

\* Or a powerful divine influence may have been exerted on their minds, to make them willing.

† Matt. xxi. 7. *Ἐκένθησαν ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ*, that is, on the clothes; *Ἐκένθη τὸν ἵματιον*, says Theophylact. Others account for this form of expression by the figure "enallage numeri," as in Gen. viii. 4, xix. 29.

‡ 2 Kings ix. 13.

tifully and poetically personified), "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and," or rather, even, "a colt, the foal of an ass." In this, the Spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus, or the proof that he was indeed Messiah. It is true, as John informs us, that "these things the disciples understood not at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." Let us be careful to mark and understand these things now, that we may draw from them that confirmation of our faith which they are so well calculated to effect.

The Redeemer advanced towards the city in this manner, which, though meek and humble, was not mean or strange. It is to be remembered that asses and mules were the animals commonly used for riding in that country; and that, in the East, they are of a finer breed than we are accustomed to see. Horses were by no means common in Judea; and, at the time and place referred to, a horse would probably have been very difficult to find. But this is not the chief consideration; for God, in order to prevent the Jews from having much intercourse with Egypt and other heathen nations, and to keep them dependent on himself, discouraged the use of horses and chariots by the Jews in general, and especially in their armies. The Lord said, by Moses, "He," the king of Israel, "shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way:" and Joshua was directed to "hough the horses, and burn the chariots," which he might take from the enemy in war.\* "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help," saith Isaiah, "and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong: but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord." "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God," saith Hosea; "take with you words, saying, Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses." In the very same passage in which, as already noticed, the Lord foretold, by Zechariah, the triumphant entrance, he also said, "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." It is true that it is only the spirit of these passages that is to be considered as a rule for the other

\* Deut. xvii. 16; Josh. xi. 6.

nations of the world, but to the Jews, under the law of ceremonies, they embodied a rule which was to be literally understood. It obviously behoved Christ, then, who was "made under the law," and who said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," to attend to the letter of the law on this occasion. In this peaceful manner, too, rather than on a warlike steed, did it suit him to make his entry who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Nor, though this was an humble act, must we for a moment suppose that it was strange, or ridiculous, or unworthy of a person of respectability. David directed Solomon, on his coronation day, to ride on the mule which he himself had used. We read of Abraham, Moses, the judge Jair's thirty sons, and other eminent persons, riding on asses.\* And magistrates are thus described and addressed, in the song of Deborah and Barak, "Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment." If any ridicule, then, has at any time been cast on this part of the sacred history, it not only betrays impiety, but "it must be retorted on the ignorance of those who have taken upon them to censure what they did not understand."—"In token of the gentleness of his administration, and his strict observance of the divine law, Christ made his public entrance into the city, not as other princes affect to appear, in a proud triumphal chariot, or riding on a stately managed horse, decked with a variety of splendid ornaments, and attended with a pompous cavalcade; but like one of the ancient patriarchs or judges in the earliest and best ages of the state, sitting upon an ass, yea, upon a colt, the foal of an ass, which, though it had never been backed before, was, in his miraculous hands, tractable and gentle."†

It is added, in the 36th verse, "*And as they went, they spread their clothes in the way:*" Matthew says, "A very great multitude spread their garments in the way." In ancient times, people sometimes testified their high honour and regard for very illustrious personages, by laying down their loose upper garments in the road for them to walk on, as on a carpet. Plutarch relates that when Cato left his army to return to Rome, "they laid their garments under his feet, that he might walk on them; which," adds he, "was an honour then done only to few emperors."‡ It is also mentioned by Matthew and Mark, that "others cut

\* Gen. xxii. 3; Exod. iv. 20; Judges x. 4, v. 10.

† Doddridge.

‡ Ἐπρόκειντο τὰ ἱμάτια τοῖς ποσσὶν τοῦ βασιλέως, Cato Minor.



down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way." Strewing the road with small branches and flowers was another ceremony used in honour of mighty men, and on very joyful occasions. Herodotus says, that when Xerxes crossed the Hellespont, they went before him, "strewing the way with myrtle branches."\* John says that "they took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Jesus." The Jews were accustomed to what was very like this, at the joyous feast of tabernacles. The Lord said, by Moses, "Ye shall take you, on the first day, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." Palm branches were especially emblematical of victory and joy. The glorified saints are described, in the Revelation, as "having palms in their hand."

In this simple yet truly interesting manner, the procession advanced; and, as it advanced, the throng increased. "*And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God, with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen.*" It appears that many more united in this than those who were, strictly speaking, Christ's disciples. Matthew says, "The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried;" and John says, "Much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem," "went forth to meet him." Of that multitude, doubtless, many were his devoted followers, and many were sincere inquirers; but far more were carried away by a temporary excitement. The disciples appear to have taken the lead, and then to have been joined by the rest, in shouts of rejoicing acclamations to Christ, and in praise to God, for all the miracles they had witnessed or heard of, and especially for the late miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, in the immediate neighbourhood.†

They cried out, "*saying, Blessed be the King,*" or, as in John, "the King of Israel," "*that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" They expressly acknowledged and proclaimed

\* *Μυρσινῆσι στρουντοίς την ὁδον.* vii. 56. Herodian relates that when the Romans joyfully received the Emperor Commodus, they strewed chaplets and flowers, *Στεφανῶν καὶ ἄνθων βολαῖς ὑπιδίχοντο;* and that the people of Aquileia scattered leaves on Maximus, *ἱφυλλοβολοῦντο τον Μαξιμον.* i. 18, and viii. 18.

† John xii. 17, 18.

Jesus to be Messiah, their King, who was come in the name and authority of God, to deliver and rule them; and they prayed that he might be "blessed," that is, happy and prosperous. They prayed also, as appears from Mark, for the prosperity of the kingdom of their father David, which they considered as having devolved on Christ. And well did they thus designate him, and praise him, and pray for him—that is, pray for the success of his cause; for this was he of whom Jehovah said, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion:"—"Prayer also shall be made for him, and daily shall he be praised." They also exclaimed, "*Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest:*" let peace and every favour be dispensed from God in heaven; and, in return, let glory be ascribed to God by men in the highest strains, and by the highest angels in the highest heavens. This was like the angelic song at the Saviour's birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." It also appears, from the other three evangelists, that the multitude used the noble and exulting cry, "Hosanna!" This word signifies, *Save now, or Save, we beseech thee*, As a prayer to Christ, which in itself the word might be,\* it would be a prayer, by the people, that he would help and save them. As a prayer for Christ, which it rather was, it was a petition for his success. Indeed, the word seems to have come to be used, in a general way, as a triumphant exclamation of welcome and praise, and to have been of similar import with that congratulatory prayer on the occasion of a king's accession, or public appearance, used in ancient and modern times, "God save the king!" The people welcomed Jesus as their Messiah and King, though they, in a great degree, misunderstood the nature of his kingdom, and of the blessings he came to confer. They reiterated the exclamation of Hosanna:† "Hosanna to the Son of David," which was one of the common names of Messiah: "Hosanna in the highest," in the highest strains, and in the highest heavens. In these exclamations, there was an obvious reference to the 118th Psalm, 25th and 26th verses. After mention of the rejoicing on account of the stone which the builders refused becoming the head stone of the corner, it is there added, "Save now" (the word in the Hebrew is, Hosanna), "save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

\* 2 Sam. xiv. 4; and 2 Kings vi. 26, in Hebrew.

† Matt. xxi. 9.

And were not these well-merited honours? Was not this a beautiful sight? Were not these delightful sounds? Yet there were those who were dissatisfied. Some of the Pharisees, who seem to have been present as spies, full of pride and envy, were grievously offended, and called on Jesus to check the cries, which, they insinuated, were at least absurd, if not even seditious, and dangerous to the public peace. "*And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.*" So, there are always some of the pharisaical spirit, who object to the affectionate language and decided profession of Christ's people, and who seek to silence and discourage them. But the Redeemer accepted and vindicated, and will ever accept and vindicate, the zealous praises of his own. "*He answered and said*" to the Pharisees, "*I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.*" This is a proverbial and highly figurative expression. The figure is somewhat similar to that in which the psalmist and some of the prophets call on the various objects of nature to praise the Lord: and the form of speech resembles that employed in the declaration of the Baptist, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" and in Habakkuk,\* in denouncing a woe on the covetous and oppressive man, "Thou hast consulted shame to thy house," "for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." When they hesitate and hang back who ought to be the first to glorify the Redeemer, God will raise up others formerly little thought of, and even despised and reckoned senseless as the stones, to do the blessed work; nay, rather than that he should want the honour due to him, miraculous testimony shall be borne to him by inanimate nature. Thus, the declaration, "The stones shall cry out," was fulfilled, almost without a figure, when, at the moment of his death, of the insulting triumph of his enemies, and of the desponding silence of his friends, "the earth quaked, and the rocks rent."

Such was the becoming conduct of the multitude on this occasion; and yet, how short-lived was the favour of most of them! A few days after, when persons of a different character headed a multitude composed in a great measure of the same individuals, that multitude exchanged the shout of praise for the yell of execration, and the "Blessed be he," and the "Hosanna," for the "Away with him!" and the

\* Habakkuk ii. 10, 11.

"Crucify him!" How uncertain and worthless is mere popular applause! It is the way of thoughtless crowds in every age to fall in with the cry of the day, whatever be its nature; and those who in ignorance are ostentatiously loud in praising religious persons and religious measures, in most cases soon become indifferent to them, or even become their bitter enemies and persecutors.

But whatever may have been the ignorance, hypocrisy, and instability of many on this occasion, the conduct of the genuine disciples at the time, followed up as it was by steadfastness afterwards, was excellent, and furnishes an example highly deserving our imitation; and to imitate their spirit and conduct is the great improvement which we should make of this part of sacred history. Let us, then, even now, join the multitude of the disciples in praising God, and ascribing Hosannas to the King of Israel. Who shall presume to find fault with us for so doing? Some may take it upon them to blame us, but we shall not heed them. Not all the infidels, formalists, and Pharisees of the day, shall rebuke us into silence. The disciples of old saw abundant reason to praise the Saviour; and we see, or ought to see, still more reason, inasmuch as we have, or ought to have, more enlarged and more clear views of the dignity of his person, the nature of his kingdom, and the value of the blessings he bestows. In us, then, let the words be fulfilled: "He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high." How reasonable thus affectionately to praise him in whom all excellence centres, and from whom all blessings flow! How delightful too!—to praise him is "pleasant," as well as "comely." Nay, how necessary, if we are to share in his salvation, and in the privileges of his kingdom! If we have no heart to praise him now, it is likely that, if we had been present at his entry into Jerusalem, we would have joined the Pharisees in looking on with sullen silence, and then objecting to the fervour of others. But let his gentleness allure us to receive him well. Let his glory lead us to bend to his sceptre. Let us remember that, though he made this procession, sitting, as the Prince of peace, on the colt, he also appears in the commanding and resistless form thus emblematically represented by John:\* "I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him was called Faithful and True: and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and

\* Rev. xix. 11.

on his head were many crowns," "and his name is called, The Word of God."—"Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword:" "and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." It was in vain that the beast, and the false prophet, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse; for they were all overthrown, and cast into a lake of fire. So, there can be no safety for us, except by our submitting to him, and getting his power engaged on our side. If we do really believe in him, so as to have any interest in the blessings of his kingdom, he will be precious to us; we would have joined in the joyful acclamations, had we been present on that occasion; and we shall feel inclined to raise the same acclamations now. Be it so, then: yes, let us praise him with all our might. Who shall prevent us? Not those who openly reject him, for we heed not at all their interference. Not those who, under a pretence of regard for prudence and sobriety, dare to censure true devotion, love, and zeal.

"Oh, ye cold-hearted, frozen formalists!  
On such a theme 'tis impious to be calm;  
Passion is reason, transport temper here.  
Devotion, when lukewarm, is undevout;  
But when it glows, its heat is struck to heav'n;  
To human hearts her golden harps are strung;  
High heav'n's orchestra chants Amen to man."\*

The lively exercise of the affections on earthly objects is applauded; why, then, do any presume to condemn their lively exercise on heavenly objects, on the divine Redeemer and the blessed God? Whatever others may say or do, it is our plain duty, and let it be our loved exercise, to call the Saviour blessed. Let us lay hold on every opportunity of doing so; and, in particular, let us embrace that which now presents itself. Now that he is brought before our mind's eye in this spirit-stirring description—now that he is coming, and even arrived within sight, let us go forth in heart to meet him, and welcome him as our Saviour and our King. Let us join the procession, and let us take up the simple yet sublime cry, Hosanna! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna! Blessed be the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest: Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!

\* Young's Night Thoughts.

## LECTURE CII.

LUKE XIX. 41-44.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

OUR Lord was now advancing in simple but solemn triumphant procession towards Jerusalem. "*And when he was come near,*" in his descent from Mount Olivet, and had reached a spot where he had a commanding prospect, "*he beheld the city*"—he view it attentively, earnestly, and compassionately; and contrasting in his mind its present prosperity and splendour with the misery and desolation which were coming on it, and mournfully pondering the still deeper ruin into which their guilt was to plunge so many of its inhabitants, "*he wept over it.*" We never read of the Saviour giving way to merriment or laughter (though, doubtless, the feelings of his benevolent heart often lighted up his blessed countenance with a smile); but we repeatedly read of his weeping. In the account of his feelings and demeanour, when going to the grave of Lazarus, we are told that "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," and we find the celebrated verse of two words, "Jesus wept." We read, too, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears."

If it really was so, as has been gathered from Epiphanius, that some of the ancient Christians, or persons who bore the name, wished to expunge from the canon of Scripture what is said of the Saviour's weeping on these two occasions, as if it had been unworthy of so glorious a person to shed tears, it was very strange, and betrayed, at once, a

sinful disrespect for the inspired Word of God, a leaning to the doctrines of Stoical pride and apathy, and an ignorance of what constitutes real excellence of human character. It is certainly a mark of imbecility to be given to weep for trifling reasons; but to weep occasionally, and when there is an adequate cause, instead of being a weakness, is perfectly compatible with true courage and manly sense, nay, is, in fact, a trait in the character of the majority of the most heroic and stout-hearted men of whom we read, either in sacred or profane history. As examples of this from Scripture may be mentioned, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, David, Jonathan, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Peter, and Paul. Who more firm than the apostle of the Gentiles?—yet he thus writes to the Philippians, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction.” As for king David, that “mighty valiant man, and man of war,” the ancestor, and, in some respects, the type of Christ, it is worthy of notice that he wept at the very place where Jesus now wept; for, it is thus written, in the account of his fleeing from Jerusalem, on the rebellion of Absalom, “David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.”\* Nor is it foreign to the defence of this act of weeping, as consonant with the character of the brave, to produce the authority of heathen writers. Homer, then, attributes tears to several of his heroes, Virgil to Eneas, and their respective historians to Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Cato, Brutus, Marcellus, and Scipio; and one of the Latin poets says, “Nature shows that she gives very tender hearts to mankind, by giving them tears. This is the best part of our disposition or feeling.”† Beyond a doubt, the tenderness which our Lord now displayed harmonized with, and set off by contrast, the wonderful resolution which animated him, when “he turned not back,” but “set his face like a flint” to what was now before him.

The circumstances, too, in which he was placed at the time, strikingly illustrated the sincerity and strength of the

\* 2 Sam. xv. 30.

† “Mollissima corda

Humano generi dare se natura fatetur,  
Quæ lacrymas dedit. Hæc nostri pars optima sensus.”  
*Juvenal.*

benevolence by which he was actuated. Advancing triumphantly amid the hosannas of the multitude, he forgot the honour done to himself in his concern for others. Approaching, too, and intently beholding the place where he was, in a few days, to be insulted, scourged, condemned, and crucified, he dwells not on his own coming sorrows, but expends his grief and tears on the impending calamities of his enemies. Not unlike this was the state of his feelings, when, as he was led forth to be crucified, and as "there followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed, and lamented him," he turned to them, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

In proceeding to consider the cause which drew these tears from the eyes of the Redeemer, we shall find that it was adequate and great. It was twofold, consisting, both in the public judgments which were coming on the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a people, on account of their national guilt, and in the fearful endless condemnation under which most of them were to fall on account of their personal guilt. The impassioned and instructive language in which his account of the cause of his weeping is introduced, is well worthy of our serious regard. He wept over the city, "*saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*"

"The things which belonged," or related "to," or regarded "their peace," their quietness, prosperity, and final happiness, were chiefly the things of Christ himself, or those things which were implied in duly receiving and obeying him, as the only way of their present security, and everlasting salvation. These things belonged more immediately to the Jews than to any other people, inasmuch as of them were the prophets who foretold those things of them; and now among them was the glorious Person himself, who was their substance; and to them they were first published, and their accompanying blessings first proposed. These things it deeply concerned them to "know," that is, to consider, so as to understand and improve them. The Lord complained of old, saying, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." "If thou hadst known!" that is, Oh if thou hadst known—for if thou hadst, it had been well. The expression is abrupt, and very emphatical. To speak after



the manner of men, the Lord was loath to abandon them now, as of old, when he said, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" He often told them that it would be well with them if they were obedient; but not otherwise. "Oh that there were such an heart in them," said he, "that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever."—"Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."—"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."—"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me."\*—"If thou hadst known, even thou"—thou, Jerusalem, inconsiderate and obstinate, though interesting and highly favoured as thou art—"at least in this thy *day*;"—now at last, however thou mayst have neglected these things before. That particular season, beyond every other, was Jerusalem's day; it was her day of brightest outward religious light and privilege; it was her day of being honoured with the visible presence of the Son of God, who came to be her Saviour and King; it was her day of finest opportunity; it was her day as a convenient and sufficient time for her to consult her safety and happiness—but yet as a limited time which was soon to come to a close. "But now they" (the things which belong to thy peace), "are hid from thine eyes." When men are labouring under wilful and obstinate prejudice, the plainest truths fail to reach their understanding: "the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." In such cases, with regard to the things which concern men's peace, God is sometimes said to "blind their eyes," and to "hide these things" from them, and to "harden their hearts:" which expressions are intended to teach, not that he exerts any positive influence to darken or harden them—to assert which would be blasphemy; but that, when they have long persevered in rejecting the truth, and resisting his tender mercies, he sometimes, in just judgment, leaves them to the darkness and hardness which they have chosen; and thus, as he resolves not to strive with them any longer, their doom is, of course, sealed, while the sin rests solely with

\* Deut. v. 29; Isa. xlviii. 18; Ps. lxxxi. 13.

themselves ; and they are, accordingly, said to harden their own hearts, and to close their own eyes. These two views of the same blindness, as the just judgment of God, and as the wilful criminality of sinners, are given in the way in which that passage in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, which is so often quoted in the New Testament, is applied in the two following places. John xii. 39: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Acts xxviii. 25: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed." This was the state of mind in which the great body of the Jews were, at the period referred to in the passage before us. It is true that individuals of them were afterwards converted; but Jesus well knew, and declared that there was no hope of any general turning of the nation to the Lord. In confirmation of the correctness of this dismal prediction, we may notice the description given of the Jews by Paul, to the Corinthians,\* nearly thirty years after. "Their minds were blinded:" "but even unto this day," "the veil is upon their hearts." And so they continued unbelieving and impenitent, till their iniquity was full: and, therefore, foreseeing and foretelling this, Christ also foresaw and foretold their consequent overthrow.

The prophecy of this dreadful punishment is here given in the following terms: "*For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.*" This is plainly a prediction of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, under the command of Titus Vespasian. As, God willing, we shall have another and more natural opportunity of noticing many other circumstances of this fatal war when we come to the 21st chapter, we shall confine ourselves here to those particulars which are directly illustrative of the passage under consideration.

\* 2 Cor. iii. 14.

"The days shall come upon thee." The exact time is not specified; nay, it seems to have been intentionally concealed, for the words of Christ, on a subsequent occasion,\* apply both to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the general judgment: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man." The time, however, was fixed, and was approaching; and the result showed that it was about forty years after Christ's death. "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee;" or, shall surround thee with a rampart: for the word† rendered trench may signify, not only a fosse, or ditch, but also any erection above the surface of the ground, in the form of a dike or wall—in short, any work constructed to guard a camp, or to defend soldiers in besieging a town, or to facilitate their operations against it. Indeed, where there is any such wall there is generally a ditch also. The trench, or rather rampart, here meant, was the great wall which the Romans raised, as it is here expressed to "compass" Jerusalem "round," and "to keep in" its inhabitants "on every side." The chief source of information as to the fulfilment of Christ's prophecies on this subject, is the historian Josephus, in his work on the Wars of the Jews, or History of the Destruction of Jerusalem; and the most captious must acknowledge, if they will think soberly for a moment, that as he was not a Christian, but an unconverted Jew—as he was a man of a strong mind and of much candour—and as he was along with the Roman army at the time, though he took no part against his countrymen, his testimony is above all suspicion.

"The city of Jerusalem," says Josephus, "was fortified with three walls, on such parts as were not encompassed with unpassable valleys, for in such places it had but one wall."‡ He describes at great length the first operations of the Roman army, in which they had taken and passed the two outer walls, and during which amazing numbers of the Jews had been slain in fighting, and had fallen in intestine commotions. He then tells us how Titus relaxed his efforts for some days, to give time to the Jews to bethink themselves and submit; and how he, Josephus himself, was sent to reason in their own language with the Jews who appeared on the wall of the city, but all in vain. The operations of

\* Matt. xxiv. 36.

† *Χαράκη*. Not elsewhere in the New Testament. But extracts from Arrian, Polybius and others, show it signifies a rampart in general.

‡ Book V. iv. 1.

the siege were then renewed with increased vigour, and the work of death went on. The Romans, however, met with more formidable obstacles than they expected, they sustained great loss, and the progress they made was very slow. The historian then gives the following account of the construction of the rampart here prophesied of, and of the consequences that resulted :—

“And now did Titus consult with his commanders what was to be done. Those that were of the warmest tempers thought he should bring the whole army against the city and storm the walls.”—“Of those that were for a more cautious management, some were for raising their banks,” or mounds “again,” which had been demolished; “and others advised to let the banks alone, and to lie still before the city, to guard against the coming out of the Jews, and against their carrying provisions into the city, and so to leave them to the famine, and this without direct fighting with them, for despair was not to be conquered.”—“Titus owned that he was afraid that the length of time thus to be spent would diminish the glory of his success;” “and his opinion was, that if they aimed at quickness joined with security, they must build a wall round about the whole city.”—“These arguments prevailed with the commanders. So Titus gave orders that the army should be distributed to their several shares of this work; and, indeed, there now came upon the soldiers a certain divine fury,” or heavenly impetus or inspiration, “so that they did not only part the whole wall that was to be built among them, nor did only one legion strive with another, but the smaller divisions of the army did the same.”—“The length of this wall was thirty-nine furlongs,” or nearly five miles. “And at this wall without were erected thirteen castles,” or places to keep garrisons in, “the circumference of which put together amounted to ten furlongs. The whole was completed in three days: so that what would naturally have required some months, was done in so short an interval as is incredible.”

“All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families: the upper rooms were full of women and infants that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also, and the young men wandered about the mar-

ket-places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them.”—“Nor was there any lamentation made under these calamities.”—“A deep silence, and a kind of deadly night had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers were still more terrible.”—“For a time the dead were buried;” “but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, in going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing.” Passing over all the intermediate events relating to the remainder of the siege, the entrance of the Romans into Jerusalem, the slaughtering of the inhabitants, the burning of the temple, &c., we find the following passage: “Now, when Titus was come into the upper part of the city, he admired not only some other places of strength in it, but particularly those strong towers which the tyrants in their mad conduct had relinquished; for when he saw their solid altitude, and the largeness of their several stones, and the exactness of their joints, as also how great was their breadth, and how extensive their length, he expressed himself after the following manner: ‘We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for, what could the hands of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers?’”

As to our Lord’s words, “They shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another,” Josephus thus most strikingly, and the more strikingly because altogether unintentionally, gives an account of their exact fulfilment: “Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done), Cæsar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple,” “leaving only three towers,” and “part of the west wall,” “in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison,” “and in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valour had subdued; but, for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground, that there was left

nothing to make those that came hither believe it had ever been inhabited.”\*

Now, more dreadfully than by the Chaldeans of old were fulfilled by the Romans the words of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah :† “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow.”—“And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down.”

This dreadful desolation came on the Jews “*because they knew not the time of their visitation.*” The time of the coming, teaching, and miracles of Christ and his apostles, was “the time of their visitation,” the time when the Lord visited them in mercy; and well had it been for them if they had known, considered, and improved it. Well had it been for them if they had been like-minded with Zacharias, who said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” But they knew not their time, they disregarded and abused their opportunity; nay, they murdered the Lord of glory, saying, “His blood be upon us and upon our children;” and they continued to oppose his gospel, and to persecute his people; and, therefore, “wrath came upon them to the uttermost.” They were destroyed within their chief city, because of this their national iniquity; and therefore our Lord lamented over them in the prospect. This lamentation resembled that which he uttered on a former occasion,‡ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

We see, then, one cause of our Saviour’s weeping over Jerusalem at this time, namely, the foresight of her destruction by the Romans. “When he was come near,” in his descent from the higher ground of Mount Olivet, what a magnificent spectacle presented itself to his view! He beheld Jerusalem’s walls, and towers, and palaces; he beheld her noble temple of white marble, partly covered with plates

\* Book v. chap. 12, &c.; vi. 9; vii. 1.

† Isa. xxix. 1.

‡ Luke xiii. 34.

of gold, glittering in the sunbeam.\* "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."—"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north; the city of the great King. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." Jesus beheld her in all her glory; and he wept over her when he thought that she was to be, as he expressed it, "laid even with the ground"—when he foresaw what the historian afterwards thus described: "It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." The certain foreknowledge of such an overthrow of any large city must have deeply affected any benevolent mind; but, the knowledge of such an overthrow of the sacred and beloved city of Jerusalem, must have been peculiarly distressing to the Redeemer. It was not only the capital of his own country, but, in respect of everything spiritual and divine, by far the most interesting place in the whole world. Here were the dwelling-place of Jehovah—the house of prayer, the sacrifices and the mercy-seat; and here the Lord vouchsafed his presence, and dispensed his favours. This was the "city of their solemnities," to which Jews and proselytes resorted from every quarter, saying, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." Jesus now beheld this city and temple in their splendour; he looked on them with all these pleasing associations, and he saw the gay throng of inhabitants pouring out by the gates to meet them—he looked forward a few years, and he saw nothing but ashes, ruins, and solitude. "He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where, through the succession of many by-past ages, the great God did use, though more obscurely, to unfold his kind propensions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known,

\* Josephus, V., v. 6.

to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance! And now that this dismal prospect presents itself of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory, and lay waste the dwellings of divine love, his sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.”\*

Let us here just notice the improvement we should make of this catastrophe in one way, namely, as *a warning of the national judgments which are sure, sooner or later, to follow on prevailing national guilt, and which may justly be dreaded by us if we remain obstinate.* We cannot, indeed, now be guilty of literally putting to death the Son of God; but we may be guilty of what is similar, and equally fatal. The Jews were a highly privileged, but very sinful people; and so are we. Are there not in our land many infidels and scoffers, who avowedly reject and blaspheme Christ? And are there not many more, who, by an ungodly life, or by continuing to neglect the great salvation, “deny the holy One and the Just,” “and crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?”—“Well,” says the apostle to the Gentile professors, “because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” At all events, if national calamities do not befall us, every individual must suffer for his obstinate disobedience at last: “Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,” there will be “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” But this leads us to consider the other cause of our Saviour’s tears on this occasion.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of its approaching overthrow by the Romans, but *still more because so many of its inhabitants were perishing, and to perish, in their sins.* It is true that much caution should be used in interpreting providences; while, however, there is often a very close connection between sin and calamity, we are here assured that the great majority of the Jews were individually in a state of sin, and that their sin was the procuring cause of their temporal ruin. But sin deserves more than temporal punishment; it deserves the wrath and curse of God, not only in this life, but also in that which is to come. The

\* Howe’s Redeemer’s Tears.



omniscient mind of the Redeemer must, therefore, have now dwelt on the endless misery which these infatuated persons were entailing on themselves. "That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are in themselves far the greatest, we all acknowledge. How unlikely is it, then, bordering so closely upon one another as temporal and eternal evils did in the present case, that so comprehensive a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to inclose both, and so spiritual a mind, apt, no doubt, to consider most what was in itself most considerable, should, in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part, and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it! Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city—the destroying of pompous buildings, that were all of a perishable material—the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion—to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever!"\* He wept, then, not only because these people were to fall, but because they were to fall under the guilt of sin. He wept because they knew not the things which belonged to their national peace and prosperity, and were bringing on themselves fire, and sword, and slaughter from the Romans; but he wept still more because they were neglecting the things which belonged to their peace of conscience, and their peace with God, their spiritual and everlasting welfare, and were bringing on themselves the withering malediction of Jehovah—eternal death and fire unquenchable. Such was the twofold cause on account of which, when Christ beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it.

And, should we not *admire and study to imitate the spirit and conduct of Jesus on this occasion*? How noble and how engaging, how faithful and how affectionate, does the Redeemer now appear! "The possibility, nay, the actual existence, of an union between awful, inflexible justice, denouncing sentence against the criminal, and benevolence sympathizing in his misery even to tears, is most affectingly shown in this passage: so that it is an unanswerable refu-

\* Howe.

tation of the charges which are constantly brought against those who denounce the vengeance of God on impenitent sinners, as if they must of course be actuated by malevolence. All such accusations involve the Saviour himself, as well as the prophets and apostles, along with modern teachers and professors of Christianity, under one general condemnation.\* Let us acknowledge and admire our Lord's compassion on this occasion. Let us be thankful that we have not an High Priest who cannot sympathize with us, but one who is like us, only without sin. Let us also remember that compassion for perishing sinners, similar to that which he manifested, has ever been a feature of true piety. "Horror hath taken hold upon me," saith the Psalmist; "rivers of water run down mine eyes;" "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not thy word." "If ye will not hear," said Jeremiah, "my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; yea, mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears." Because of the unbelief of the Jews, Paul felt very painfully and strongly, so that he said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." Thus let us feel for those who, there may be reason to fear, are going on in sin; and let the feeling prompt us to do all we can for their conversion, while yet there is room for hope.

But, to conclude with some remarks on this lamentation and these tears, as admonishing us individually.

1. *There are things which belong to our peace also, which it concerns us to know.* These things are the gracious discoveries of the gospel. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ," he has also sent to us. Of the things which relate to this divine message it concerns us deeply to come to the personal, distinct, believing, experimental and practical knowledge; for, on our adoption or rejection of them depends our everlasting happiness or misery. Let us, therefore, in this way, "acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace, that thereby good may come unto us." "This is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

2. *This may well be called our "day," and "the time of our visitation."* We enjoy the means of grace in abundance. We have God's ministry, and Sabbath, and Word, and sacraments. It may be, too, that we have particular

\* Scott.

calls of providence, convictions of conscience, and strivings of the Spirit, which render the present a most favourable and inviting opportunity for receiving Christ and his salvation. To-day, then, if we will hear God's voice, let us not harden our hearts. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Let us forthwith comply with the merciful design for which we are thus visited; and let us, "by our good works which men shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Well indeed will it be for us, if, in this saving sense, it can be said of us, "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

3. *The words and tears of the Redeemer, on this particular occasion, establish for ever his compassion for perishing sinners, and assure them of his readiness to receive them, if they improve the day of their visitation.* "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Though the perfection of the Saviour's happiness in his state of exaltation forbids the idea of his weeping now, the tears he shed when on earth are, in principle, universally applicable to show his wondrous pity, and the lively interest he ever takes in the salvation of men.

Think, then, thou sinner who art neglecting the things which belong to thy peace, and abusing the time of thy visitation—think what those tears of Christ's signify, of which we here read. "They signify the real depth and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an intellectual and comprehensive eye, that sees far, and pierces deep into things—hath a wide and large prospect—takes the compass of that forlorn state into which unreconcilable sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe Him that did, at least believe his tears. They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. They show the remedilessness of thy case, if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief, till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. He even tells thee, sinner, 'Thou hast despised my blood, thou shalt yet have my tears'—that would have saved thee, these can only weep thee lost. But the tears wept over others as lost and past

hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to Him whom thou has pierced, dost truly mourn over him, thou mayst assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless. Thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy."\*

*Believers! what a blessed thing is it, finally, that you have come to know the things that belong to your peace.* There is blessedness in this for your Saviour; for when he beholds you, it is with pleasure; he sees in you the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. Instead of weeping over you, he rejoices over you, and rests in his love. There is blessedness in this also for yourselves, and you are called on to joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement. Whatever judgments may befall others, the day can never come when any real evil shall touch you. You shall escape unscathed by the lightning of heaven's wrath; and all the blessings of grace and glory shall rest on your heads. Instead of being doomed to ruin, like the inhabitants of the earthly Jerusalem of old, you are the accepted citizens of Jerusalem above, and shall be admitted at last into that holy and heavenly city into which there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, but they only who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

\* Howe.

## LECTURE CIII.

## LUKE XIX. 45-48.

“And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; 46. Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests, and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him, 48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.”

HAVING wept over devoted Jerusalem, as he advanced towards it in meek triumphant procession, our Lord had now entered within its walls. Matthew\* says, “When he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee.” And whither did his heart lead him to repair immediately on his entrance? To the temple. On occasions somewhat similar, it is not so with too many who bear his name. There are too many who, when they go to visit the capital of their own country, or any other great city, hasten to the places of public amusement, and to see and hear whatever, in the opinion of men of the world, is reckoned most interesting; but who are long of thinking of the house of God, if they think of it at all; who, if they do go to see a church, or two, go merely to admire the architecture, or from some other impulse of curiosity, and not from any real desire to honour God, or reap benefit from the ordinances, or learn the state of religion in the place; and who even spend perhaps weeks in neglect, and leave the city in ignorance, of such things. Such persons would do well to think seriously how this conduct is decisive of their being in an unconverted and perishing condition. They would do well to mark and improve the words of the apostle: “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and

\* Matt. xxi. 10.

peace." They who "mind earthly things, are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end," if they so continue, "is destruction." Such have not the Spirit of Christ, and, therefore, are none of his. It was not so with Jesus Christ. As soon as he entered into Jerusalem in triumph, he went straight to the temple; thus demonstrating at once the spiritual nature of his kingdom and the deep interest he felt in religion.

When we examine the parallel passage in Mark xi. 11, we find it written: "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple;" in which words it is evidently implied that he entered into the temple immediately on his entrance into the city: it is added, "And when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." Then Mark goes on to tell how, "on the morrow," Jesus cursed the fig-tree, and then went into the temple and cast out the buyers and sellers. When, again, we examine Matthew and Luke, it is almost unavoidable to conclude, that he purged the temple on the very day of his triumphant entrance into the city, especially as Matthew introduces the account of our Lord's doing so before that of his leaving the city for Bethany, and before that of his cursing the fig-tree. Hence it is the opinion of most commentators that he purged the temple on these two successive days, namely, on the day of his triumph, and on the succeeding day, when he found, that, notwithstanding what he had done, many of these profaners had the audacity to return. As to Mark only mentioning Christ's entering into the temple and looking round about upon all things, it is well remarked, that though there was an obvious propriety in carefully examining the state of things before acting, it is not likely that he would have beheld so shameful proceedings without immediately feeling that virtuous displeasure rise within him which would not admit of any unnecessary delay in expressing his mind, and carrying the reform into execution; and it is further remarked that, on this supposition, this is only one of the many examples in which an inspired writer's mentioning some circumstances which took place at a particular time, by no means amounts to a declaration that no other circumstances then occurred. Some, however, think the whole relates to the one transaction of one day, Mark's account being only a recapitulation and enlargement of what he had just before briefly noticed. At all events, if these

actions were different, as seems the more probable supposition, they were so similar as to be mutually illustrative of each other. Besides, it is to be recollected that Jesus acted in a similar way long before this, namely, at the first passover which he attended after the commencement of his public ministry. The history of that transaction is given only by the evangelist John: it is found in his 2d chapter, from the 13th verse, and it must also be considered as throwing light on the event now under our consideration. Thus the Saviour acted at the first passover after he stood forward openly to the world, and thus he acted about the time of the last passover which he ever attended.\* The account in John is as follows:—"And the Jews' passover was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The manner in which Jesus acted on this later occasion, as here noticed by Luke, appears very similar, especially when the additional circumstances stated by Matthew and Mark,† which we shall soon specify, are included.

And is there not, in the very first appearance of this procedure, something strange, and very different from the usual placid demeanour of the Saviour? Whence (we feel ourselves compelled to ask) can this arise? "Whence comes this aspect of zeal and of indignation which Jesus Christ, on this occasion, allows his countenance to betray? Is this, then, that King of peace, who was to appear in Zion armed with his meekness alone? We have seen him sitting as judge over an adulteress, and he hath not even condemned her. His disciples wanted the fire of heaven to descend upon an ungrateful and perverse village; but he reproached them with being still unacquainted with that new spirit of mercy and of charity which he came to spread throughout the earth. He had just been lamenting, with tears, the miseries which threaten Jerusalem, that criminal city, the

\* The scheme which would identify the cases is justly exploded.

† Matt. xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 15-17.

murderess of the prophets, which is on the eve of sealing the sentence of her reprobation by the iniquitous death she is so soon to inflict on Him whom God had sent to be her Redeemer. On every occasion he hath appeared feeling and merciful; and, in consequence of his exceeding meekness, he hath been called the friend even of publicans and sinners. What, then, are the outrages which now triumph over all his clemency, and arm his gracious hands with the rod of justice and of wrath?—The holy temple is profaned; his Father's house is dishonoured; the place of prayer, and the sacred asylum of the penitent, is turned into a house of traffic and of avarice: this is what calls the lightning into those eyes which would wish to cast only looks of compassion upon sinners. Many other scandals besides those seen in the temple doubtless took place in that city; but, as if his Father's glory had been less wounded by them, he can overlook them for a time, and delay their punishment. The chastisement of the profaners of the temple, however, can admit of no delay; his zeal, on this occasion, admits of no bounds; and scarcely has he entered Jerusalem, when he flies to the holy place, to avenge the honour of his Father there insulted, and the glory of his house which they dishonour. Of all crimes by which the greatness of God is insulted, none are more deserving of his chastisements than the profanations of his temples, which are so much the more criminal, as the dispositions required of us by religion, when engaged there, ought to be the more holy.\*

Jesus "*went into the temple.*" That which is here called "the temple," or, as it might have been more closely rendered, "the sacred, or holy, place,"† was very extensive. It included, not only the magnificent house, or covered building, more strictly called the temple, but also the several courts which were enclosed, but not roofed in. These courts were three. The first was "the court of the Gentiles," into which, as the name implies, those who were not Jews were permitted and encouraged to enter, but beyond which they were not allowed to advance. The second was "the court of the Jews," where those of that nation who were ceremonially clean, and "proselytes of righteousness," who engaged to observe the whole law, worshipped. The third was "the court of the priests," in which stood the altar of burnt-offerings, and the priests executed their office in sacrificing. Beyond this court still stood the sanctuary, or the

\* Massillon.

† *To isov.*



house of God, more strictly so called. It was, probably, in the first of these courts that Christ found people employed in traffic of various kinds, particularly, as appears from a comparison of all the evangelists, in buying and selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and in transacting the business of money-changers. Now, this was very contumelious and injurious to the Gentiles, who were entitled to have this court left clear and comfortable for their own use: it was also a profanation of part of a place which was all sacred, and a scandalous insult to Jehovah who was there served. To have used this court for any secular purpose whatever would have been sinful; to turn it into a cattle market, was most abominable. In consequence of the great number of animals of those particular kinds which were required for sacrifice, at the feast of the passover, it was certainly necessary that there should be, at this time, an extensive market for them somewhere in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; but surely it ought to have been held anywhere rather than in the temple. The great influx of strangers, too, at this season, from almost every part of the world, rendered the accommodation afforded by money-changers now peculiarly necessary; but, surely, the temple was not the spot for them to place their tables for transacting that business. Doubtless, the avarice of these dealers, on the one hand, led them to apply for what they thought would be a favourable situation for gaining money; while the avarice of the priests, on the other hand, led them, for the sake of some remuneration, to grant the shameful application.

When our Lord beheld these things going on in the temple, "*he began,*" says Luke, "*to cast out them that sold, and them that bought.*" Matthew and Mark say that "he overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;" and Mark adds, that "he would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple"—he would not allow any vessel, or utensil, or bulky article, or burden, to be carried through any of the courts—he would not suffer the courts to be made an ordinary thoroughfare. This was quite in accordance with the precept,\* "Ye shall reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord." On the similar occasion, which we have already noticed from John, "when Jesus had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the

\* Lev. xix. 30.

sheep, and the oxen." These very strong measures proved the extreme grossness and criminality of the abuses in question. No doubt, those who were guilty of them might have set up a specious plea in behalf of the expediency, at least, if not necessity, of such traffic; but it does not appear that they attempted any defence at this time, nor, if they had, would Christ have listened to it. In fact, the house of God was thus degraded, and that in a way by which the minds of those who ought to have been engaged in a composed and devout manner, must often have been grievously distracted, and filled with vain and earthly thoughts. It was a great corruption indeed thus to "make a gain of godliness," and to use religion as "a cloak of covetousness"—a mere pretext to promote worldly ends. This energetic procedure also manifested Christ's holy indignation at these abuses. Of purer eyes than to behold any iniquity without displeasure, he was justly incensed to a very high degree by such profanity as this. This conduct also showed his courage; for, however many there were who were interested to uphold these corruptions, and ready to unite in opposing his attempt to put them down, he regarded them not—he was not dismayed at their faces. In thus repeatedly purging the temple, Christ, in part at least, fulfilled the prophecy in Malachi: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

That these profaners of the temple submitted so readily to this movement to eject them, is justly considered to have been the effect of Christ's divine power on their minds; and thus this event is reckoned among his miracles. They did not combine and rise against him; but they were overawed into non-resistance, they gave place, and hasted out. And this reformation he accomplished by his own power as Head of the Church, singly and unsupported, nay, in opposition to the authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical. So, afterwards, when a multitude came out against him with swords and staves, "as soon as he said, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." And so always, when

he puts forth his power to subdue, whether in mercy or in wrath, the proudest heart gives way before him.

In defence of his conduct on this occasion, our Lord said, "*It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.*" According to Mark,\* the words of the former clause are: "My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer," or, as the rendering might be, more agreeably to the natural order of the original Greek, and to the passage referred to in the Old Testament, "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." That the temple was especially intended for prayer appears from much of what Solomon said in his prayer at the dedication.† But Jesus here evidently quotes from Isa. lvi. 7. The whole passage runs thus: "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for mine house shall be called, An house of prayer for all people." The temple was a house of prayer, not only for Jews, but for "the sons of the stranger," for Gentiles, "for all people," for all of every nation who should come to worship there. This quotation was, therefore, peculiarly appropriate, as it proved, not only that the whole temple was to be considered as sacred, but that the place appropriated for the Gentiles should have been kept clear for their use. "But ye have made it a den of thieves." Here Jesus alludes to Jer. vii. 11: "Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes." In some parts of the world, bands of robbers shelter themselves in dens and caves of the desert, from which they issue forth to attack, and to rob, and to which they return to divide their plunder. This comparison intimated that many of these dealers were guilty of defrauding their fellow-creatures, as well as profaning the temple of their Creator. And so, it most commonly happens, that those who openly cast off the fear of God, and also those who make a hypocritical profession of religion, are very deficient in honesty in their dealings: such is the general rule, though there are, no doubt, exceptions.

The account of the former action of the same nature men-

\* Mark xi. 17.

† 1 Kings viii. 28.

tioned by John ends thus: "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This is an exact quotation from the 9th verse of the 59th Psalm, and, in that particular part of the psalm, David may be considered as a type of Christ. "The zeal of thy house," that is, zeal relating to, or for thy house. "I bear them record," says Paul of the Jews, "that they have a zeal of God;" that is, for, or relating to God, in other words, a religious zeal. That zeal did eat up, or consume, or waste Jesus. An intense regard for the honour of God's house, "like a secret flame, glowed in his bosom, preyed on his spirits," and would have overpowered and destroyed him, had he not given it vent, and taken measures for the accomplishment of its object. His heart, it is true, was always strongly set on promoting his Father's glory; but the disciples could not but observe how peculiarly applicable these words were to his feelings and conduct on the present occasion. It is worthy of notice, that, though the disciples had become acquainted with that passage in the Psalms before, it was not till now that they were able properly to apply it. Hence, let us be encouraged to store up in our memory the words of inspiration in the meantime, resting assured that, though we may perceive but little of the import of some of them at present, future events will explain them.

When we examine the parallel passage in Matthew, we find that, at this time, "the blind and the lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them." Then, too, "when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And (when the even-tide was come, Mark xi. 11) he left them, and went out of the city unto Bethany; and he lodged there."

Luke adds, in the beginning of the 47th verse, "*And he taught daily in the temple.*" He diligently employed, in teaching, the few remaining days before his crucifixion: and the substance of many of the instructions he then delivered is found in the two following chapters. He lodged in Bethany during the night, and daily returned to Jerusalem to teach in the temple. "*But the chief priests and the*

*scribes, and the chief of the people,"* which may be a description of the Sanhedrim, or supreme council, "*sought to destroy him.*" The more his power and grace were displayed, the more were these infatuated men bent on his destruction. The fearless exposure, too, which he had just made of some of the most glaring abuses which they encouraged, or tolerated, irritated them exceedingly; for, those whom faithful dealing does not reform, it generally offends. But these enemies of Christ, who sought to destroy him, "*could not find what they might do,*" or, "could not devise how to effect it."\* They could not accomplish their horrible purpose for a time, "*for all the people were very attentive to hear him.*" The form of expression here employed is very forcible and beautiful; and the same expression, or one very like it, frequently occurs in the classics. The literal meaning is, "They hung on him, hearing." Similar to this are the expressions, to hang on one's countenance,† and to hang on one's lips. The people listened with the greatest eagerness and delight to Christ as a prophet, and would, probably, at this time, have resisted any attempt to offer violence to him. Their deep attention was right, in so far, and is worthy of our imitation. Jesus still speaks to us in his Word, read and preached, and we may still say, "Never man spake like this man." Let us give earnest heed to the things which we hear, lest at any time we let them slip. Let us bear him witness, and admire the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth. And, while we literally listen with the ear, may the Lord open our hearts to attend to the things which are spoken: may he enable us to incline our ear, and come to him, and to hear so that our souls may live.

But, let us conclude with some remarks, for the farther improvement of the leading subject before us, namely, the purging of the temple.

1. *Abuses are apt to creep into the Church.* This is the case with regard both to ministers and people. However pure the system may be which they originally adopt, the sins and imperfections of their fallen nature produce, on the whole,‡ a tendency to degenerate. It is a sad thing when covetousness, for example, becomes the ruling passion with those who ought to be patterns to the people—when they

\* Campbell.

† "Penditque iterum narrantis ab ore"—She again hung on the mouth of the narrator.—*Æneid*, iv. 79.

desire to be put into the priest's office, chiefly "that they may eat a piece of bread"—when offices are sought and valued chiefly according to the income they bring—when evils are connived at for the sake of emolument—when the watchmen are like "greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they that are shepherds cannot understand, but all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter." Such are as bad as Demetrius of Ephesus, who made silver images for Diana, and thus "brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." It is true that "they who serve at the altar should live by the altar:" but, without any affectation of disinterestedness, they ought, certainly, to have far higher motives than their own temporal advantage; especially, the love of Christ and the love of souls should influence them. They ought to "feed the flock of God which is among them, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The people also are apt to cherish abuses when they are for their own profit, or ease, and to become as bad as their leaders. Now, inconsistency of every kind, especially selfishness, on the part of known professors of religion of any class, is one of the chief causes of infidelity, and of the avowed dislike of many to all appearance of piety. "There were false prophets among the people," says Peter, "even as there shall be false teachers among you:" "and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." Aware, then, that abuses are apt to creep in, let us be on our guard against their first introduction; let us resist the beginnings of evil; and let us adhere steadfastly to scriptural purity and simplicity of doctrine and practice.

2. *The Church is much indebted, under God, to those who have had the courage to stand forward as real reformers.* Such was Hezekiah. "He opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them." "He said unto the Levites, Sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place." And they cleansed all the house of the Lord. Such a reformer also was king Josiah, who destroyed idolatry, repaired the temple, read publicly the book of the law which had been found, and "took away

all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel."\* The lasting gratitude of the Church is due to Luther, Calvin, Latimer, Ridley, Knox, and the other reformers, who were the instruments of delivering so great a part of Christendom from Popish darkness and superstition. They are indeed the benefactors of the Church who successfully exert themselves to correct doctrinal and practical errors, and to promote the scriptural administration of ordinances, discipline, and government. Thus, the progress of corruption is arrested, the beauty of Christianity is restored, and the glory of God, and the religious, and even civil, interests of men are promoted.

3. *It is the duty of us all, according to our several places and stations, to do what we can to reform whatever abuses may exist in the Church in our own times.* If, for example, there exist among us, in any degree, such abuses as the following:—if there be any simony, that is, buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices; if there be any improper means used to obtain situations in the Church, or any gain made by undue compliances in such situations; if any receive the wages without doing the work, or be starved in the work; if any one man eat the bread of two; if the people, on the one hand, be deprived of any of their privileges, such as that of their consent being held necessary to the formation of the pastoral relation, which ought to be cordially mutual, or, if the people, on the other hand, manifest a spirit of insubordination to the firm exercise of the discipline and government of their Church rulers; if there be any known profanation of sealing ordinances, or any obvious transgression, or neglect, in any party—we are all bound, without usurping what does not belong to us, to endeavour to get such things corrected. Various pleas will be advanced against such improvements, none of which, however, should prevail to shelter any real evil. Long use will be pleaded in some cases; but the longer any evil has been tolerated, the sooner should it be eradicated. Some will object to touching the fabric at all, lest it should be overthrown; and there is, unquestionably, some danger, lest, when great movements are made, they may not be arrested in proper time. Here, however, is true Christian wisdom, to know where to begin, and where to stop. Surely, our safety does not consist in resisting all improvement, nor does the stability of our ecclesiastical fabric depend on any un-

\* 2 Chron. xxix. and xxxiv.

seemly additions. If we cling to what is wrong, we shall certainly suffer for doing so, sooner or later. Whatever is a real improvement, and nothing else, should be attempted. Whatever is merely bringing things back to the original and acknowledged principles of a scriptural economy, is plainly safe, and most desirable. That is a true reform for which the authority of Scripture can be produced, in regard to which it can be said, "It is written."

This action of our Lord is clearly applicable to the correction of all improprieties in places of worship. From such places, the gross offence of light and otherwise indecorous conduct, and worldly business, should be utterly banished. Nay, the very indulgence of worldly thoughts there is an abuse, which we should study to purge out. Let us not be of those who "come and sit" like God's people, and "hear his words, but will not do them;" "who with their mouth show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Indeed, we should not only avoid what is offensive, but conduct ourselves with becoming reverence, in God's house, remembering his words, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Thus may we expect to improve by our opportunities, and to obtain the divine blessing on our engagements.

4. *Let this purification of the temple lead us to seek the purification of our own hearts.* The state in which Christ found the temple is but too exact an emblem of the human heart—full of sin and worldly desires and cares. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We need the cleansing blood and special grace of Christ, that the world and the wicked one may be driven out, and that our hearts may become the temples of the Holy Ghost. And, though our hearts have already been so purified in regeneration as to have become temples of God, corruptions will still be apt to creep back into them, so that we shall find it necessary to seek repeated cleansing, and to be constantly careful to "keep our hearts with all diligence" against vile intruders. "Know ye not," says Paul, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Let us be studious to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God:" and may the Lord purge us



as with hyssop, that we may be clean, and wash us, that we may be whiter than the snow.

Lastly. *In all we attempt for the benefit of others, or of ourselves, let us imitate the zeal which our Master displayed on this occasion.* To be useful to man, or acceptable to God, we must be deeply in earnest—we must have the Spirit of Christ in this respect. We must resemble Paul at Athens, whose “spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” We must have the zeal necessary to reprove, at proper times, sin in others, and to mortify it in ourselves. Neither fear, nor shame, nor sinful inclination should restrain us in such cases. Yet, we must not usurp the authority which does not belong to us, but act according to our own place and station. Let our zeal be always “according to knowledge,” in a good cause, prudent, pure, free from bigotry and passion, steady, and proportioned to the importance of the end in view. Let us remember the necessity of such zeal, in order to be useful to others, to be acceptable to God, and to prove the reality of our religion, and our being the peculiar people of Christ. These are the awakening words of our Lord himself: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.” And these are the admonitory words of his apostle: “It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing.” “Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

## LECTURE CIV.

## LUKE XX. 1-8.

“And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders, 2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. 8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

WE formerly found that our Lord came to Bethany six days before the passover, and entered Jerusalem in triumph on the following day, probably the first day of the week. We also found that he retired to pass the intervening nights at Bethany, and returned to teach in Jerusalem during the day. At the close of the preceding chapter, Luke says: “And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests, and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.”

In this connection, the evangelist proceeds to say, in the beginning of the 20th chapter, “*And it came to pass, that, on one of these days,*” that is, one of the days between his triumphant entry and his death, “*as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel.*” God’s house of prayer was also a house of preaching, and both these exercises go together in our Christian assemblies. The apostles said,\* “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” But never was there such a preacher as he who now taught in the temple. The office was dignified and honoured by his engaging in it. He “taught as one having authority,” and “never man spake like him.” He who now taught was himself the Redeemer; he who

\* Acts vi. 4.

now preached the gospel was himself the great subject of it; he who now offered salvation was himself the purchaser and bestower of it. He taught "the people"—the great body of the community, the poor as well as the rich—a lesson that the object of the Christian ministry is not attained in any place, unless it be brought to bear on the great mass of the population.

Surely this was an employment most worthy of him whom the Lord had "anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek," or "the gospel to the poor:" it was an employment in which he should have been universally encouraged and welcomed. With their usual perverseness, however, those who ought to have been the first to promote his views, were the most forward to oppose and trouble him: "*The chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders.*" Under the description of "chief priests," might be included the high priest, his deputy, the heads of the twenty-four courses,\* and other distinguished men of Aaron's family; the "scribes," again, or doctors, were the teachers of the law—several of both these classes were, doubtless, members of the Sanhedrim, or supreme council of the nation; and, by the "elders" here mentioned, are probably to be understood certain other members of that council: so that, altogether, these men may have been a representation of the Sanhedrim itself, the court which possessed the chief ecclesiastical authority, the government of the temple, and the power of inquiring and judging as to the validity of claims to the prophetic office. A number of these leading men "came upon" Christ as he was teaching in the temple—came upon him suddenly and with violence, in the hope of leading him to say something of which they might take advantage against him; and still more, as appears from the sequel, with the hope of being able to deter him from continuing to teach, by a threatening show of their power in peremptorily calling on him to account for his conduct, as follows—

"*They spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or, who is he that gave thee this authority?*" The things to which they referred were, no doubt, those of recent occurrence, or those of the very moment, especially his receiving the acclamations of the people as Messiah, his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and his publicly teaching in that sacred place. They

\* See 1 Chron. xxiv. 1-19.

demanding, in an overbearing and contemptuous manner, how he took so much upon him: they insisted on him to say what authority he had for acting so, for they were sure he had none from them, to whom they intimated that it belonged to determine and give license in such matters. In fact, they intimated that he had no authority at all for what he did; and they intended to silence him entirely. Thus, God's enemies, under pretence of a regard for his glory, have, in many cases, interfered to restrain his faithful servants, both by words and deeds of violence. "Zedekiah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" "Pashur, who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks."\* In the 4th chapter of the Acts, we read that, as Peter and John "spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people," "and they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" It is quite true, and important to be observed, that none should come forward as public teachers but those who have sufficient authority for doing so. Among the Jews, only two ways of entrance on the office were acknowledged as legitimate, the one, through "the schools of the prophets," as they were called—that is, through the ordinary education intended to qualify men for public instructors; and the other, through extraordinary and miraculous call and inspiration. The Lord thus complained of some teachers, by Jeremiah, "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." It is well known that the priesthood, and other ministrations of the sanctuary were carefully guarded. No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Nor are any entitled to take up the Christian mini-

\* 1 Kings xxii. 24; Jer. xx. 1.

stry of their own accord: "The things that thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses," says Paul to Timothy, "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others."

But, however true and important this may be, we have already noticed several instances of misapplied and oppressive interference; and surely the interruption now offered to Jesus Christ was most unreasonable, unjustifiable, and sinful. These unbelieving and tyrannical men, proudly vaunting of their power, set at nought all the miraculous evidence he had given of his divine commission, and then, in a rude and dictatorial manner, demanded what he had to say in vindication of his claims as a prophet and as Messiah. How preposterous! It is plain that this demand was made, not from any sincere desire to ascertain the truth, that they might form their opinion and conduct according to it, but from a desire to bear him down, and in a spirit of prejudice and obstinacy which was not to be convinced. In such circumstances, our Lord was under no obligation, in point of civility or openness, to give them any answer whatever: no answer which he could have given would have satisfied them; and he could not have given them a direct answer with safety to himself. If they had got him to say what, in their estimation, amounted to an acknowledgment that he had no good authority for what he did (though such a thing can hardly be supposed,) it is evident that their triumph would have been complete. If, on the other hand, he had said, in so many words, that he had his authority from heaven, and that he was the long expected Messiah, they would have exclaimed against him as an impostor and blasphemer, and hurried him off to be tried under a capital charge, holding his own confession to be a sufficient proof of his guilt. He had already given most satisfactory proof of his divine mission, by the many miracles he wrought in express confirmation of it; and, when they would not believe him on that evidence, it was not to be expected that they would now have believed him on his mere word. "If I bear witness of myself," said he at an earlier period,\* "my witness is not true;" that is, ye might doubt of it, if that were my only proof. And then, after speaking of the witness of John, he adds, "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me,

\* John v. 31, x. 24.

that the Father hath sent me." When he was in the temple, too, at the feast of dedication, "then came the Jews round about him, and said, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly"—as if his then telling them would have convinced them. "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do, in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." In like manner, we read\* that, "as soon as it was day," on the morning of the day of his death, "the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes, came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? Tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go." But his hour being then come, he made the most unequivocal assertion of his Messiahship; on which they said, in triumph, "What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." With much wisdom, then, as to himself, and with perfect fairness as to his insidious enemies, he now declined giving them any direct reply, and answered by putting a question of his own to them.

*"And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men."* The word "heaven" is here put for the God of heaven, as in Daniel, "Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule;" and in the parable of the prodigal son, "I have sinned against heaven." Our Lord proceeds on the supposition that John's baptism was either from heaven or of men; for he does not hint at the opprobrious idea of its being from Satan. The same alternative was implied in Gamaliel's argument: "If this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Now, it was quite reasonable in Christ to put this question to the chief priests, scribes, and elders, not only because many of them had had opportunity of knowing about John in their private capacity, but also because a commission of them had been formally sent to the Baptist to make inquiry, and therefore it was to be supposed that the council had come to a determination on the point; but if they had, then that determination would involve an answer to the question now put to Jesus, inasmuch as John bore testimony to him as the Christ: "This is the record of John, when the Jews sent

\* Luke xxii. 66.

priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? and he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ."—"But there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: he it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose."—"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" Thus, you perceive that there was no shuffling, no evasion of an honest question in this procedure of our Lord; but it was skilfully adapted to the circumstances in which he was placed, and the character of those with whom he had to deal. Here was one instance in which were fulfilled the words of the Lord, by Isaiah, predicting that in every respect Messiah should accomplish his undertaking with the most consummate skill and complete success. "My servant shall deal prudently." He met a captious question with a fair question. So, when the scribes and Pharisees\* asked him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?" he met them with a question which silenced them, and paved the way for an answer to themselves—"What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" In the case before us, Jesus "took the wise in their own craftiness." He did not assert his Messiahship, nor appeal to his miracles, nor upbraid them with their obstinacy and unbelief; but he called on them to say whether John had a divine commission or not; well knowing that, in whatever way they answered, or whether they gave any answer at all, they would at once save him the trouble and risk of giving a direct reply to their question, and inculcate themselves.

*"And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet."* They reasoned "with," or among, "themselves"—that is, with each other: but their reasonings may well be designated as carnal reasonings. They did not reason, as they ought to have done, on the character John maintained, on the doctrines he taught, on the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in him as the prophet who was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, and on the testimony he bore to Jesus as Messiah. Such inquiries as these, which alone

\* Matt. xii. 10; Luke xiv. 3.

would have been to the purpose, they carefully avoided; and, regardless of truth and of conscience, they consulted only what they thought would be for their own credit, consistency, and safety, according to the false position they had taken up. They felt it impossible to attain this object by the expression of any opinion favourable, or unfavourable, to John's claim. They felt, on the one hand, that if, as truth required, they were to acknowledge that John had a divine commission to preach and baptize, they would lay themselves open to the charge of sinful inconsistency in not submitting to his baptism, and in disregarding his testimony to Jesus as the Christ. On the other hand, they were afraid that, if they declared against the Baptist's claim, they would expose themselves to the reproaches, and perhaps the violence of the populace, who were firmly convinced that John was a true prophet. A similar apprehension restrained Herod, for a season, from killing John, though he broke through the restraint at last: "When he would have put John to death," says Matthew,\* "he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet." So also, we read from the 19th verse of this chapter, "And the chief priests, and the scribes, the same hour, sought to lay hands on Jesus; and they feared the people." A like apprehension procured better treatment, on one occasion, for the apostles, than they might otherwise have experienced:† "Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned."

We may here observe, that the great body of the people, though liable to be misled, are generally very bold for what they reckon just or sacred; and that, though violence is not to be commended, even in a good cause, their known antipathies sometimes prevent very shameful decisions, and very bad measures, on the part of civil and ecclesiastical rulers: the fear of men, the apprehension of the unpleasant consequences which the public indignation is likely to bring on them, frequently deters unprincipled men from acknowledging all the wickedness that is in their hearts, and from perpetrating all the wicked actions of which they would otherwise be guilty. This may be considered a particular illustration of the rule, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." It should be remembered, however, that as the fear of man

\* Matt. xiv. 5.

† Acts v. 26.



often restrains from evil, so it also often restrains from good. Neither rulers nor people, neither high nor low, should yield to any such fear as deters from confessing and following Christ. The parents of the blind man whom Jesus restored to sight were not so frank in telling the truth of the miracle as they should have been, "because they feared the Jews;"\* and "among the chief rulers also many believed on Christ; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Had these men who came upon our Lord in the temple followed the light of truth, and what must have been the conviction of every honest mind, they would have boldly confessed both John the forerunner and Jesus the Messiah. But they meanly as well as obstinately shrunk from their duty: they were well pleased to get off, and to stand tolerably fair with the people. Though their fear operated differently, and they had not the honesty to confess their guilt, their wish was, in some respects, not unlike that expressed by Saul,† when Samuel told him that the Lord had rejected him from being king over Israel: "I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words, because I feared the people."—"Yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel." Nor, whatever they might suppose, and however they might screen themselves by such duplicity, for a time, was this the true way to secure their permanent safety; for it exposed them to that divine displeasure which involved them in temporal calamities, and, where repentance and conversion prevented not, in endless ruin. The path of integrity, simplicity, and pious intrepidity, is the only path of credit and of security. "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."‡

When asked whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men, the chief priests, scribes, and elders "*answered, that they could not tell whence it was.*" If it really was so that they *could* not tell, it was a great shame, and a great sin; for, not only had they to answer for themselves in an affair involving their own salvation, but, being the rulers of the people, they ought to have been at all pains to make up their mind, that they might be able to guide them aright on so momentous an occasion. There is reason, however, to suspect that, generally speaking, it was

\* John ix. 22, xii. 42.

† 1 Sam. xv. 30.

‡ Prov. xxix. 25.

not that they could not, but that they would not, give the true reply.

As they would not answer this preliminary question, so neither would Jesus answer them. "*Neither tell I you,*" said he, "*by what authority I do these things.*" The other question came naturally to be determined first, and if that had been decided, the same answer would have served for both.\* But they would not consider the premises, aware of what must have been the conclusion. Thus, we see again, that, though a direct and explicit answer had been given them, it would have had no effect in convincing and gaining them. Besides, persons so unreasonable did not deserve to be farther reasoned with. As they would not follow the light they had, they were justly denied more. Nay, not improving the talent, the opportunity, they had, they were punished by having that taken from them; and most of them appear to have been left to the darkness they had voluntarily chosen. The most wonderful and undeniable facts were disregarded by them, the plainest inferences could not be drawn by them, and the Scriptures were as a sealed book to them. Now, the words in Isaiah found eminently their fulfilment: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their eyes heavy, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed."—"For the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets, and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed."

Such is the passage now before us, which, though it may not be quite so full of deeply interesting and pleasing matter as some other passages, is, nevertheless, important and instructive in reference both to the character of the Saviour, and to the workings of the human heart. In improving the passage, then, let us,

1. *Learn to imitate the prudence of Jesus Christ in dealing with the opposers of the truth.* This lesson is read to us in his here giving these cavillers question for question, and meeting them in their own way. If we are his faithful followers, we may expect to be sometimes set on in a

\* Doddridge.

similar manner. In such cases, we should study to be wise as serpents, though harmless as doves. When we are questioned with a view to ensnare us, or in a way calculated to justify irreligion, and misrepresent and injure the truth, we should not be rash with our tongue, but think well before we speak. In the language of Solomon "The heart of the wise studieth to answer."—"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Sometimes one plan is to be followed, and sometimes another. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without," says Paul to the Colossians. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."—"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," says Peter; "and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." It is of importance to remember that this prudence is necessary in dealing not only with open opposers of all religion, but also with those who, with some profession of a general regard for religion, are studious to ward off from themselves all personal conviction and impression. In many cases of this kind, one of the best methods of procedure is to meet captious or curious questions with some preliminary question calculated to throw the reflections of the speculators back on themselves, and to lead directly to the personal and practical application of the truth.

2. We learn, from this passage, *that it is in vain for men to become professed inquirers into the evidences of Christianity, or into the arguments for immediate personal vital religion, if they bring to the inquiry a mind full of prejudice, and a heart determined on resistance.* This was evidently the case with the Jews here mentioned; and, as might have been expected, the far greater part of them rejected and opposed the gospel to the last. In like manner, there are still persons who wish to be called free-thinkers, who boast of liberty of thought, and of sincerity of inquiry, who yet are under bondage to preconceived opinions, to long cherished pride and obstinacy, and perhaps to habits of immorality. It is not to be expected that such persons will escape from the snare of infidelity by any inquiries in such a state of mind; but the humble, sincere, and prayerful inquirer cannot but come to see the truth of revelation. And so, there are

persons not ranking with infidels, who attend on the means of grace, and who would seem to be desirous of being brought under the influence of true religion, but who are not in earnest, who are by no means faithful to themselves, who are still clinging to their errors and sins, instead of sincerely and ardently desiring deliverance from them; who, in a word, do not wish to be converted. No wonder that such persons continue in a state of estrangement from God. Aware of all this, let us, by the help of God, be sincerely willing, and quite resolved, to yield our understandings to the reception, and our hearts and lives to the influence, of the gospel. So shall our safety be certain, and our progress great.

Lastly, and more particularly, *Let us beware of resembling the chief priests, scribes, and elders, of whom we have been reading.*

While ecclesiastical order ought to be observed, and they are to blame who violate it, let us not, though it may be in our power, imitate these Jews, in uncalled-for and oppressive interference to restrain the liberty of religious teaching. Let us avoid the duplicity here betrayed. Double dealing will bring disquietude, if not shameful detection; whereas, honesty will inspire with confidence, and command respect. Instead of imitating their carnal reasonings on expediency, as different from justice and duty, let us be anxious that every such imagination may be cast down within us, and let us lay hold, and steadily act, on broad, decided, scriptural principles. Let us not seek to screen unbelief and inconsistency; but let us seek deliverance from them, and resolutely cast away from us everything that offendeth. Let us not, like these Jews, pretend ignorance, in order to palliate conduct which is not according to knowledge; but let us confess what we do know, and act in conformity with it. Let us not belie or conceal any convictions we may have of the excellence and incumbency of genuine religion, as an excuse for well-known worldliness and carelessness. This may be seen through by our fellow-creatures: at all events, it will leave us without excuse, and miserable in our own minds; and he who searches the heart and tries the reins, will mark it to our condemnation. Let us beware of wilfully shutting our eyes against the light of life, lest we become incurably blind, by loving darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil, and so the gospel be hid

to us, as lost persons, whom the god of this world hath blinded. And, if we do confess (which is more than these Jews would confess) that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, and the Lamb of God, as borne witness to by his forerunner, let there be no room to say to us, "Why then do ye not believe him?" That is, Why do ye not believe in him in his true character? Why do ye not actually receive him in all his offices? Let us study, by divine grace, to know the gospel, and to be strong in the faith. Let us confide in the Saviour's merits; let us love and honour his name; let us show that we are his, by doing whatsoever he commands; let us confess him before the world; and let us be faithful to him to the last.

## LECTURE CV.

LUKE XX. 9-18.

"Then began he to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. 14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder."

WHEN men are sincere and ingenuous, they readily discern, acknowledge, and personally apply, the truth; but when they are prejudiced and set against conviction, they are very inaccessible to argument. Hence, one chief advantage of parables, which represent spiritual things, not only simply and intelligibly, but in a way calculated to avoid the exciting of suspicion, and thus to lead on untoward men to feel, and, perhaps, confess the truth of very important principles, before they are fully aware of their application to themselves. In the parable now read, our Lord, with holy dexterity, brings the obstinately unbelieving Jews to acknowledge that the most fearful misery must be expected to overtake all the enemies of God, and, by just inference, their own nation; and if we rightly follow out the scope of the parable, we shall also be convinced that certain destruction awaits every soul that rejects the gospel, and that to receive Jesus Christ, and improve our religious privileges, is the only way of safety.

This parable, the parable of the vineyard, is given in very nearly the same words, by Matthew and Mark.\* After our Lord, as he was teaching in the temple, had silenced the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who had insolently demanded by what authority he acted, while they disregarded the miraculous evidence he had given of his divine mission, and the testimony of John the Baptist—“*Then began he to speak to the people this parable.*” He addressed himself to the whole multitude, including the above-mentioned rulers. “*A certain man planted a vineyard.*” The “certain man,” or “householder,” that is, master of a family and estate, is evidently intended to represent God. The “vineyard” is intended to represent the visible Church, or the possession of the outward privileges of the true religion. Under the comparison of a vineyard Israel is represented, in various particulars, as having been the object of much work and care. The Lord “planted” it as a vineyard is planted with vines, furnishing it with many advantages and helps for spiritual fruitfulness; he “planted it a noble vine, wholly a right seed.” And so it is, wherever the Church is in purity, and as God would have it. Every thing in the Church is, or, at least, should be, according to his appointment. “Every plant,” saith our Lord, “which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” All that is good in the system, or in the ministers of the Church, is of divine origin. God appoints her statutes, and her faithful people are called “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

Some additional particulars of comparison are stated in the parable, as given by Matthew and Mark. Having planted this vineyard, the householder “hedged it round about,”† as is commonly done with vineyards and gardens, to mark them off, in a pleasing manner, from the surrounding land, which is waste, or cultivated with less care and expense; and to defend them against injurious incursions. So, where true religion is professed, the country is inclosed, as it were, from the regions of heathenism; and, in addition to this, the visible Church is cut off and separated from the world by special ordinances, which are at once ordinances of union and ordinances of distinction. The Church is also hedged round for security, being defended by the wise and powerful providence of God: “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the

\* Matt. xxi. 33; Mark xii. 1.

† Matt. xxi. 33.

glory in the midst of her.”\* It is added in Matthew, “And he digged a wine-press in it;” that is, he constructed a wine-press, and dug a cavity in the earth, to hold the vat for containing the expressed juice of the grapes.† This may refer to the sacrifices, and other rites of the Jewish economy, and more generally to whatever is necessary for the Church, under any dispensation. “And he built a tower in it.” It was usual to erect a small tower, from the top of which those who kept the vineyard could look round and superintend the whole, to which they could retire for shelter, and in which, when necessary, they could remain during the night, or at any time, to be ready to defend the vineyard against beasts and robbers. Such a tower, too, it may be supposed, would generally be very ornamental. The temple at Jerusalem was such a tower in the vineyard of Israel; and we have here another beautiful illustration of the goodness of God in adorning and protecting his Church, “for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”

There are two passages of Scripture which are peculiarly worthy of notice, as carrying out this simile of the vineyard fully, and in a variety of striking particulars. First, in the 80th Psalm: “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.” “Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they who pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, and look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.” Secondly, in the 5th chapter of Isaiah: “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge,

\* Zech. ii. 5; see also Isa. xxvii. 2.

† In Matthew, the word is *ληνος*; in Mark, *ὄψαλινος*.



I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

This vineyard, its owner, according to the parable, "*let out to husbandmen*," or farmed out for a certain stipulated rent. The husbandmen, more immediately intended, were the Jews; especially, their priests and rulers, who held all their advantages under the express condition of improving them for the glory of God. The same principle, however, applies to all who are possessed of similar privileges. The householder then "*went into a far country for a long time*." After the giving of the law, the Lord, comparatively speaking, withdrew from the Jews; and for a long time before the coming of Christ, he left them without a prophet, and without any miraculous manifestations of himself. And so, after introducing among a people, perhaps, by signal providential interferences, the light and ordinances of the gospel, God usually allows things to remain as they are, and, to speak after the manner of men, waits for years to see what is to be the result. This letting out of a vineyard for a rent is thus described in the following passage of the Song of Solomon:\* "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

"*And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard.*" According to the law of Moses,† whatever fruit might be on any trees for the first three years after they were planted, was ceremonially unclean, and not to be used at all; the

\* Song of Sol. viii. 11.

† Lev. xix. 23.

fruit of the fourth year was to be consecrated to the Lord; and the fruit of the fifth and subsequent years might be eaten in the common way. This may have been in opposition to some idolatrous customs; but it seems plainly to have been intended to teach that men should wait patiently for every desirable good, and honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first-fruits of all their increase; and also, that God graciously waits for their fruitfulness, and for the maturity of their graces. When the proper time was come, both as to the year, and the season of the year, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant for the rent, which, it is here supposed, was to have been paid in kind. "*But,*" instead of receiving the servant with respect, and sending by him the payment they were due, "*the husbandmen*" most wickedly and selfishly "*beat him*" (the word signifies, scourged him very severely), "*and sent him away empty.*"

When their landlord heard of their crime, instead of immediately proceeding against them with severity, as he might justly have done, "*he again sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again, he sent a third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out.*" According to Matthew, "they killed one, and stoned another:" and when the owner of the vineyard still "sent other servants more than the first," that is, more in point of number, and higher in point of office, "they did unto them likewise."

The servants whom God sent to the Jews were his prophets, who came to call both the rulers and the people to account. Now, they were notorious for the ill treatment of these prophets, many instances of which are recorded. For example, "Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord;" Micaiah was smitten on the cheek: Elijah was called by king Ahab, "He that troubleth Israel," and had to flee for his life: Isaiah had much contradiction to endure, and it is believed that he was sawn asunder: Jeremiah, during the greater part of his life, was much persecuted; Pashur, the chief governor of the house of the Lord, smote him, and put him into the stocks, all his familiars watched for his halting, and the men of his own town, Anathoth, sought his life. We have this general account of the conduct of the Jews before the captivity of Babylon: \* "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on

\* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.

his people, and on his dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." They pursued the same conduct, also, towards faithful teachers and prophets afterwards. John the Baptist was cast into prison and beheaded. Jesus Christ and his apostles had already been often insulted, and threatened with destruction; and the enmity of the rulers and people was soon to break forth against them in a still more violent manner. "Wherefore," said our Lord, "behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." And how is all this opposition and persecution to be accounted for? From considerations well calculated to lead us to godly jealousy over ourselves, namely, from the consideration of the depravity of the human heart, and from the consideration, that when faithful warnings do not impress and convert men, they harden and irritate them.

"Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do?" Still unwilling to proceed to extremities with the wicked husbandmen, he bethought himself of what other expedient he could adopt, with the view of bringing them to a sense of their duty. So, the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And wonderful indeed, when all other means had failed, was the expedient to which he resorted, as referred to in this parable, in a way too plain to be misunderstood. "*I will send my beloved son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him:*" beholding him a person of such dignity, they will be so struck as to be ashamed of themselves, and to blush before him; instead of insulting or injuring him, they will at once submit: "it may be," or rather, surely,\* they will reverence him. This part of the parable must not be too rigidly interpreted. He who knows all things

\* *Idem* generally signifies *equaliter*, or *fortasse*. But Elsner shows from Demosthenes, Æschines, and others, that the word sometimes signifies, *profecto*, *certe*, and remarks that it is so used in the Septuagint, (1 Sam. xxv. 21), and that in the parallel passages of Matthew and

well knew that his beloved Son, our Saviour, was to be put to death; and there are many predictions to that effect, both in the Old and New Testament. The meaning is, that the most reverential and submissive reception of him was what was absolutely due, and reasonably to be expected in justice and gratitude. This clause also implies, that, great as was God's goodness in sending so many prophets, it was far greater in sending his Son; and that the contempt of this last and greatest messenger would be altogether inexcusable, and incur the heaviest punishment without delay. "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things."—"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?"

*"But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."* On the part of the husbandmen so situated, this reasoning betrayed, not only extreme wickedness, but extreme folly; for, how could they imagine, that, after they had been guilty of so atrocious deed, the lord of the vineyard would let them alone to enjoy the fruits of their robbery and murder? Thus, the parable is a very exact representation of the infatuation, as well as of the guilt, of the Jewish rulers. These reasonings, no doubt, referred to the consultations they were holding, and the plans they were forming against our Lord. With regard to the husbandmen knowing the heir, it is true that those who were concerned in the crucifixion of Jesus were not fully aware of what they were doing; for, writing to the Corinthians, concerning the wisdom of God, the apostle says, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Yet, from their obstinate infatuation in general, as well as from this clause, it may be inferred, that many suspected, and even had the conviction forced on them, that he was the Messiah, and, therefore, in persecuting him to Mark, we have the simple and positive affirmation, "They will reverence:" from all which he concludes that the word is to be so understood here. Dr Campbell renders it "surely." It may be doubtful which is the more exact translation; but, according to both, the general meaning will be much the same.

death, acted in direct violation of their own consciences. The priests and other rulers sought to kill him, in the vain hope that the inheritance would be theirs; that is, that thus they would preserve their authority, and revenues, and continue to rule unmolested by his rebukes. "*So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.*" How this was fulfilled in the murder of Christ appears in the subsequent part of his history. What the Master, Jesus, here parabolically predicted, his servant Peter afterwards charged on the men of Israel, as a crime which had actually been committed: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Having thus finished what is strictly to be considered as the parable, our Lord turns to his hearers, especially to the priests, scribes, and elders, and asks: "*What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*" when he comes back, armed with irresistible power, how will he treat them? Luke here omits what is expressly mentioned by Matthew,\* that the Jewish rulers present replied to this question. Not being aware at first that the conduct of these husbandmen was a representation of their own conduct, they answered so as to condemn themselves: "They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons." On this, Jesus, taking up their words, and, as it were saying that they were right, added, as in Luke: "*He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.*" This he spoke in such a way as to convince them, now that they had a little more time to reflect, that he intended the parable as a description of them: indeed, according to Matthew,† our Lord afterwards put this beyond a doubt, by saying: "Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Then, as in Luke, "*When they heard it,*" when they heard this, and understood how they were pointed at, "*they said, God forbid*"—God forbid that such a thing should happen to us; we cannot believe that it ever will. In this, however, there was no penitence, nor faith, nor godly fear; it was not a pious prayer, but a profane exclamation, and, therefore, it was not followed by any good. They crucified the Son of God in three days, thus

\* Matt. xxi. 41.

† Matt. xxi. 43.

perpetrating the very crime the punishment of which they now vainly deprecated. Their reasonable anticipation, in the supposed case of others of similar character with themselves, was fulfilled in their own case, in the destruction of their city and nation by the Romans, and in the still more dreadful doom of the impenitent of them in the other world. As in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, in which his invitation was slighted, and his servants were spitefully treated and slain, "when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." The vineyard, too, was taken from them, and given to others. The management of the affairs of the Church was taken from these priests, scribes, and elders, and given to the apostles and evangelists, and other ministers of the gospel; and the religious privileges of the Jews, because of their rejection of them, were transferred to the Gentile nations. "It was necessary," said Paul and Barnabas, "that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so the Lord hath commanded us." Among these Gentiles, the gospel did produce fruit to the glory of God, and the benefit of immortal souls. "The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you," says the apostle to the Colossians, "as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day that ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth."

When these Jews had exclaimed, in this proud and blind spirit, "God forbid!" Jesus "*beheld them*," that is, looked on them steadily, and solemnly, "*and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.*" This is an exact quotation from the 22d verse of the 118th Psalm. It may sometimes happen that masons, in looking for stones which they think will answer, may cast aside, as unfit for their purpose, one which may yet afterwards be found to suit an important place in the building; hence, the mode of expression under consideration. The passage of the psalm, in its primary application, points to David himself, who was like a rejected stone, having much to contend with in the opposition of Saul, and otherwise, but who was brought forward to be king, at first of part, and at last of the whole, of Israel. But the passage is also universally allowed to point to

Messiah, and it is applied to Jesus in the New Testament no fewer than six times. The builders of the day were these same Jewish priests, scribes, and elders. Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified by them, and yet he was made the head of the corner; that is, he was gloriously exalted in his resurrection and ascension, and in the triumphs of his gospel, and he will be still more exalted when all things shall be actually put under his feet. "God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." It is proper to remark here, that while believers constitute the temple of God, Jesus Christ is represented in Scripture both as the chief corner-stone at the foundation, and as the head of the corner at the top of the building.\* The corner-stone is an important one, both at the bottom and at the top. While Christ is the only foundation of hope towards God, he is also, like the head stone of the corner, completing, binding together, and adorning the whole.

Our Lord adds, finally: "*Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*" The evangelical prophet, in words applied to Christ in the New Testament, says: "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." It is generally thought that the language of the verse under consideration is borrowed from one of the modes of stoning criminals to death which were practised by the Jews. Sometimes this was done in the most obvious way, by a number of persons casting a number of stones at the criminal, as he was standing or kneeling on the ground. At other times, however—and this is the mode here referred to—the criminal was placed on a scaffold, ten or twelve feet high, whence he was thrown down on a large stone that lay on the ground; and then, as he might not be killed by the fall, a large stone was cast down on his heart, as he lay on the ground, which was sure to crush him to

\* *Ἀπεργωνιζοις*, Eph. ii. 20; and *κρίσθη γωνίας*, as here.

death.\* The distinction here drawn between the degrees of injury occasioned to men by falling on a stone, and by its falling on them, suggests two or three different, yet consistent ideas, though it is difficult to say which of them may be more especially intended, or whether they may not be all intended. It may be, as if our Lord had said: "Who-soever shall stumble at me and my doctrine, while I am here on earth, in this humble form, he shall be broken or damaged by it; but whosoever shall oppose me after my exaltation to glory, and the pouring out of my Spirit for the full revelation of my gospel, and proof of my mission, he will bring upon himself still more aggravated guilt, and dreadful, unavoidable destruction."† Or the meaning may be, more generally, that sin, in any degree, will be hurtful; but very heinous sin, such as persecuting Christ and his people, will be followed by peculiarly severe punishment: "The condemnation of spiteful persecutors will be much heavier than that of careless unbelievers."‡ Or, yet again, the meaning may be, that those who live for a time in unbelief and impenitence shall suffer loss, but those who die and cause the wrath of Christ to come down on them in that state, shall perish for ever. The fall of rocks, or mountains, would not more completely crush a man's body, than would the wrath of the Lamb both the body and soul of such an enemy. "He shall break them with a rod of iron; he shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Surely, the voice of the Lord in this passage is like that in the 2d Psalm: "Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

In improving this parable,

1. *Let us be thankful that God has planted his vineyard among us.* We are situated, not in any of the deserts, or wastes, or commons, of the world, but in the vineyard, in "a garden inclosed," in the very garden of the Lord. We have the Scriptures, and the ministry, and the house of prayer, and all the converting and sealing ordinances of the gospel; and these privileges have been bestowed on our land, and continued with it, and guarded for it, in a singularly striking and gracious manner. "Blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear" such things. "The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant place; yea, we have a goodly heritage."—"He hath not dealt so with any."

\* Lightfoot's *Horse* on Matt. xxi. 44. † Doddridge. ‡ Henry.



nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord."

2. *Let us inquire whether we be rendering to the Lord of the vineyard the fruit which he expects in its season.* Are we diligently cultivating the vineyard he has intrusted to us, in order that we may have wherewithal to pay him the rent he requires? He calls for a return in kind, that is, for religious privileges he requires religious characters; for grace given he requires the fruits of grace—the graces of the divine life. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Are we bearing, and presenting to the Lord, such fruit as these? or are our "grapes of gall, whose clusters are bitter?" Are we barren of everything acceptable and honouring to God, and productive only in what ministers to our own worldly views and wayward inclinations? Let it not be said of us: "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Let us inquire what promising appearances of fruit unto God there are in those who are in early life, or newly impressed: "Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vines flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud forth." Let us inquire, also, what full-grown fruit is to be seen in middle life, and what ripe fruit in old age. In order to bearing any fruit fit to be paid to the Owner of the vineyard, let us apprehend the necessity of our being ingrafted into Christ, and abiding in him by faith. These are his words: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"—"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Let us practically attend to this, and we shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ "unto the glory and praise of God."

3. *Beware of resembling these wicked husbandmen in their conduct, lest you also resemble them in their doom.* You see the treatment they gave to their lord's servants, who were sent to call for the stipulated return of rent, and how, from misusing and destroying them, they proceeded to murder his son and heir, and how their destruction is supposed to follow of course. What reception, then, are you giving to God's ministers, and especially to God's beloved Son? Avowed and violent persecution is here restrained by law, so that it is difficult for any of you to inflict that; but, if any of you despise God's servants, and are rejecting their message, and refusing to comply with their call to yield to

God of the fruit of the vineyard of religious privileges, it is most probable that you would be persecutors if you could, and that, if you had lived in those days, you would have joined in misusing and killing God's messengers, not excepting his Son himself. At all events, you are now rejecting the Saviour, nay, you are crucifying him to yourselves afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Beware, lest God, who spared not the natural branches, spare not you. Remember, too, ye careless ones, that it is not a mere expression of horror at the sound of perdition, a mere impenitent exclamation of "God forbid!" that will save you from perishing. It will be in vain for you to deprecate the punishment of sin if you are meditating the commission of sin, and continuing to cherish it, and if you disregard the way of deliverance from its guilt and power. The question is not what you say, but, what is written in Scripture? Think of its many strong declarations against the ungodly; and then ask yourselves, whether it be reasonable for you to expect that these declarations will be falsified, and the whole plans of the Almighty deranged, in order that you may escape with impunity? "Shall the earth be forsaken, and shall the rock be removed out of his place" for you?

In the last place, *See that you give to the Lord Jesus that place in your spiritual building which is his due.* Let him be both at its foundation and at its top. Let him be both "the author and the finisher of your faith." Let your motto be, "Christ is all, and in all." He does occupy this important place in God's arrangement; let him occupy it in yours, while you say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Thus, when those who have rejected him shall call to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, but find no shelter from his overwhelming wrath, you shall triumph in his love, and the top-stone of your spiritual building shall be "brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!"—"Rest, then, humble believer, all thy hopes upon this Corner-stone, so perfectly tried, so inestimably precious. Till thy Corner-stone fail, and thy Foundation sink away, thou canst never be removed. Here is strong consolation for thee, in the midst of a miserable and tempestuous world. Hold fast, and thou shalt hold on; or rather, because Christ hath laid fast hold upon thee, thou shalt remain his own for ever. The arm which supports thee is divine. All hell hath felt its force; and, irretrievably vanquished, shall acknowledge its

power. Thou art God's building; and, therefore, though floods may beat and the winds blow, thou shalt stand fast as thy Rock and thy faithful Witness in heaven. But, what amazement shall seize the builders, when they behold the Stone, which once they refused, appearing the Head of the corner! Those sagacious mortals, who fancied their *dicta* were to build up the opinions of the world, and who, with their wisdom, never knew God, will find a strange revolution in sentiment and feeling, when Jesus, whom they once denied, or degraded, shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and thunder his creation to judgment. At that awful period, those self-sufficient persons, who, out of a swarm of idle thoughts, were for making a system of wisdom, and out of a giddy whirl of innumerable amusements, as so many minute particles of pleasure, were for forming a world of happiness, will find their hypothesis as crude as their deceiver's, and the consequence of it unhappily the same. The Stone of stumbling, and the Rock of offence, will then fall upon their heads with a perpetual vengeance; and the Saviour, whose deity and omnipotence they madly disputed, will instil terrors by his presence, and give them a dismal proof that he is almighty to destroy. Happy, in that day, unspeakably happy, shall those appear, who are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." \*

\* Serle's *Horæ Solitariae*.

## LECTURE CVI

LUKE XX. 19-26.

"And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. 20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cesar or no? 23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24. Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cesar's. 25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which be Cesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. 26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace."

THE last subject engaging our attention was the parable of the vineyard, or the wicked husbandmen. Luke now goes on to say, that when "*the chief priests and the scribes*" "*perceived that Christ had spoken this parable against them,*" instead of wisely improving it for their warning and conversion, they were much enraged, and, "*the same hour, sought to lay hands on him*"—to seize him, and put him to death. There seemed but two ways to which they could have recourse, in order to accomplish their horrible purpose. The one was that of open, lawless violence. That, however, they could not, in the present state of public feeling, attempt with any prospect of success, or even safety to themselves. "*They feared the people,*" knowing that Jesus was, as yet, a general favourite with them, and that they counted him, as they had counted John, a prophet. The other way which they might adopt was that of getting him accused before the government, and condemned with some show of law. This was the plan on which they fixed; but even its safe and successful execution required considerable address and caution. We find parallel passages giving an account of this resolution of the question about tribute-money, in the

22d chapter of Matthew from the 15th verse, and in the 12th chapter of Mark from the 13th verse. According to Matthew, after Jesus had spoken the parables of the vineyard and the wedding-garment, "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk"—how they might get him to say something of which they might take advantage against him. According to Luke, "*They watched him, and sent forth spies, who should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him into the power and authority of the governor.*" It appears, from Matthew and Mark, that the spies now sent were "certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians." Suffice it to say here of the Pharisees, of whom we have so often found mention, that they were peculiarly anxious to assert the independence of their nation, in opposition to the Roman yoke. With regard to the Herodians, according to the commonly received, and, I believe, the correct opinion, this appellation was originally given to the partisans of Herod the Great, and then to those of his family. In process of time, they came to be considered a distinct party, or sect, having certain opinions characteristic of themselves. Our Lord cautioned his disciples to "beware of the leaven," or doctrine, "of Herod."\* Their doctrines are supposed to have been reducible to two heads: first, that the dominion of the Romans over the Jews was just, and, by all means, not only to be submitted to, but supported;† and, secondly, that, in the circumstances of the times, they might lawfully follow many heathen customs. Herod himself acted plainly on the first of these principles; and he is spoken of as excusing himself, on the ground of the necessity of the times, for acting in many things contrary to the rules of the Jewish religion."‡ The Pharisees, then, and the Herodians, were much opposed to each other in the general tenor of their opinions and measures; yet they forgot their usual animosities in their enmity to Christ. Nor was this the first time they had united in a similar conspiracy; for, a considerable time before, when he had healed the man with the withered hand, in the synagogue, on the Sabbath-day, "the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him,

\* Mark viii. 15.

† The opposite view of their principles is given in Calmet; but, surely, the very name Herodians implied that they were friendly to Herod.

‡ Prideaux; Joseph. Antiq. xv.

how they might destroy him."\* Thus it often happens, that persons who can hardly agree in anything else, agree in disliking and vilifying, and perhaps in taking active and strong measures against, true religion. This should teach the friends of the truth to unite in its support. When bad men conspire, good men should associate. But, in this respect, as in many others, the children of this world are, in their generation, often wiser than the children of light.

The persons of these two sects who now came as spies on Christ, pretended to be "just men;" that is, men of piety and of conscience, who were inquiring, with the view of having their scruples settled. Their true aim, however, was to entrap him, so that they might have something like a fair pretence for carrying him before the Roman governor, or procurator, who at the time was Pontius Pilate, in order that he might convict and condemn him capitally, which the Jewish council could no longer do in any case.† In like manner, persecuting ecclesiastics have generally devolved the odious task of executing their cruel measures on civil magistrates.

The spies prefaced their question in the following courteous manner:—"Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly." If they, in this, spoke as they thought, their crime of compassing his death was against their own full conviction; if they did not speak what they thought, they were guilty of the basest dissimulation. Whatever were their views, it was a true testimony they bore; for Jesus was indeed "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness," who never swerved, in the slightest degree, from the truth, to please either the great or the small. Similar unbending fidelity is necessary in every public teacher. "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts."—"I charge thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels," writes Paul to Timothy, "that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." But, however true this character of Christ was, this address, on the part of these spies, was mere flattery. They called him Master, or Teacher; but they followed not his instructions. They complimented him on his undeviating regard to truth, and his resolute integrity; but it

\* Mark iii. 6.

† John xviii. 31.

was with the hope of putting him off his guard, and leading him to unbosom himself to them, in a way which would compromise his safety. When men praise us excessively to our face we should suspect them of some sinister design. "He who caresses thee more than he was wont to do, has either deceived thee, or is wishing to do it." \* This proverb you will seldom find to fail; and it was obviously true in the case under consideration. These men were influenced by the spirit of Joab, who said to Amasa, "Art thou in health, my brother? and took him by the beard to kiss him," and at the same moment "smote him with the sword under the fifth rib;" and by the spirit of Judas, who "betrayed the Son of man with a kiss." They "spoke with flattering lips and a double heart:"—"The words of their mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in their heart; their words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."

As the manner of their accosting our Lord was artful, so the question they put to him was very insidious. "*They asked him, saying, Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?*" The emperor then reigning at Rome was Tiberius Cæsar. The actual government of the Eastern countries, over which the Roman arms had prevailed, was in the hand of kings, tetrarchs, or procurators, who held of Cæsar, that is, of the Roman emperor, by whom they were appointed to their office, or confirmed in it; and taxes were levied in these countries, not only for defraying the expense of the local governments, but also for the purpose of being sent to Rome, by way of tribute, or acknowledgment of Roman superiority. It became a question among the Jews, whether it was lawful for them to pay such tribute. The opposition to its payment, and, indeed, to all acknowledgment of foreign dictation, was grounded, by those who professed a regard to the Mosaic law, on the injunction in Deut. xvii. 15: "One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother." That law, no doubt, limited them in their own voluntary choice of a king; but it was quite an overstraining of it to interpret it as prohibiting the quiet, and even conscientious submission to a government which, though it had been imposed on them by force, they had acknowledged, and which they had not the power to throw

\* "*Chi ti fa carezze più che non suole,  
O t' ha ingannato, o ingannar ti vuole.*"

*Italian proverb, quoted by Dr A. Clarke.*

off. Opposition in such circumstances was a proof of national pride and obstinacy, rather than of religious principle. The words of the Lord to the Jews by Jeremiah,\* included not only a prophecy of their being brought under Nebuchadnezzar, but a direction to submit to him: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live:" "wherefore should this city be laid waste?" Many of the Jews, during the time of our Lord's life on earth, indulged national pride of this sort, though they were already subdued. They said, with a particular reference to their outward condition, with much more vanity than truth, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." Their unwillingness to submit to the dominant authorities led many of them, on various occasions, to break out into violent seditions, which could only end in their discomfiture and destruction. Judas Gaulonites, as he is called by Josephus, was the leader in one of these insurrections, of whom we thus read in the Acts of the Apostles:† "After this man" (Theudas) "rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." The disturbances and miseries occasioned by such persons, whom the Jewish historian commonly calls Zealots, were numerous and lamentable; and the adherence of so many to the same policy furnished the chief provocation to the Romans utterly to destroy their city and nation.

The Pharisees, being more jealous and proud of their national privileges than careful to improve them, were much disposed to join in these oppositions to the Roman power, which, however fruitless, were, on the whole, popular. The Herodians, on the other hand, as already stated, were subservient courtiers, and keen supporters of the Roman interest. Here, however, both these parties united in questioning Christ on the subject, as if they were at a loss to judge for themselves, and quite disposed to submit to his decision. The depth of their duplicity and malice in this was great. Formerly, his enemies had questioned him on matters more purely religious; now, they question him on what has more of a political bearing. It is very difficult for teachers of religion to speak on political subjects without giving offence, without running into extremes, and without sacrificing something of scriptural principle, either to please the great on

\* Jer. xxvii. 12.

† Acts v. 37.



the one hand, or to court popular favour on the other. The petty politics of party are always to be shunned by them; yet the great outlines of the duty of rulers and subjects ought to be stated without flinching, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. Our Lord here furnishes them with an excellent example, both of avoiding a weak or a suspicious silence, when they are called on to speak out; and also of going no farther than prudence admits, and religion requires. Much wisdom was clearly necessary to answer safely and satisfactorily the question now put to our Lord. Had he said that it was not lawful to pay the tribute, or spoken in defence of religion, in any way which might have been twisted into an attack on the civil powers, the Herodians would have taken the lead against him; and, encouraged in this case, however inconsistently, by the Pharisees, would have accused him of disloyalty and sedition before Pontius Pilate, whose authority, and zeal for the Roman side of the question, would have been strengthened by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was then at Jerusalem. Had he, on the contrary, answered, abruptly and incautiously, that the Jews ought to submit to the tribute, the Pharisees, in this case, to the gratification of the Herodians, would have urged on the populace to destroy him in a tumult. He was not deterred, however, from answering distinctly, in a matter of such importance; yet, he answered prudently, and in a way which must have been very convincing to every unprejudiced mind, while it exposed and silenced his adversaries.

*"He perceived their craftiness,"* says the evangelist. He knows all that is in man, and, in particular, knows what duplicity and hypocrisy are in any man in any age. Let us remember this; and let us think of the folly and the danger of attempting to deceive him with false professions of regard. These are his own words:\* *"All the Churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."* Jesus *"said unto them, Why tempt ye me?"*—that is, why do ye try, by such a question, to draw me into a destructive snare? Let us beware of all approaches to such conduct. Let us not, by disingenuousness, or wickedness of any kind, put Christ's forbearance to the test. *"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted"* him in the wilderness, *"and were destroyed of serpents."*

\* Rev. ii. 23.

"*Show me a penny,*" said our Lord; or, as in Matthew, "Show me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny." This was the Roman *denarius*, a silver coin, of the value of about seven pence half-penny of our money. Jesus then asked, "*Whose image and superscription hath it?*" *They answered and said, Cæsar's.*" Christ did not put this question because he needed any information himself, but because he wished an acknowledgment from his subtle adversaries, which might lead to an answer to their ensnaring question. Metals used for mercantile purposes were at first kept in large pieces, and weighed every time they were paid over into new hands. In process of time, they were made of a certain weight; and the weight was marked on them, with other devices in some cases. And at last, handsome coins were formed, bearing on them the image, or likeness, or head, and the superscription, or inscription of the name and titles of the reigning princes, or something characteristic of the different nations. Coining money was held to be the prerogative of the supreme powers; such money could not be legally refused by their subjects; and to counterfeit or injure it was punished as a crime against the state. Julius Cæsar was the first who caused his image to be struck on the Roman coins. In this way, the national faith was pledged for the purity and value of the money, and public confidence was secured for its circulation. To admit any money to be a legal tender, is to acknowledge the government by which it is issued. The following passage, from a rabbinical work, furnishes at once a specimen of the way in which fanciful traditions were mixed up with the real history of the Old Testament, and a proof of the doctrine of the rabbis themselves on this very point: "Abigail said to David, What evil have I done, or my sons, or my cattle? He answered, Your husband vilifies my kingdom. Are you then, said she, a king? To which he answered, Did not Samuel anoint me for a king? She replied, The money of our lord Saul as yet is current—that is, Is not Saul to be accounted king, while his money is still received commonly by all?"\* Add to this the following example, from several which might be produced: "When Sultan Mahmoud of the Indies wished to seize on the dominions of the Queen of Persia, about the year of our Lord 999, he sent an ambassador to her, with the following order: You must acknowledge me for your king, cause the *kootbah* to be read—

\* See Lightfoot's *Horse* on Matt. xxii. 20.

that is, pray for me in all the mosques of the kingdom, and get your money recoined, with the impression that is on mine."\* Admitting the coin, then, which bore the Roman emperor's image and legend to be good and lawful money, was equivalent to acknowledging his authority as supreme ruler. But that coin was now current in Judea. The Jews made no scruple to use it in their ordinary transactions. They were in this acknowledging the imperial reign; and they were enjoying its protection, while they were quiet and orderly. Thus, on the whole, however mortifying it might be to their national pride, and opposed to their narrow scruples, the inference that they ought to pay the tribute-money followed unavoidably from their own admissions. For many years, perhaps so many as a hundred, the Roman power had been predominant in the country, and was always strengthening; and a considerable time had elapsed since Judea was reduced into the form of a Roman province. It was, therefore, now by far too late to dispute the Roman supremacy by right of conquest, and in fact.

The way was thus prepared, by these captious men themselves, for our Lord's answer. Instead of discussing the abstract question, which would have been useless and dangerous, he seized on the acknowledgment of his enemies, and replied in the only way which duty and the circumstances of the times could justify, "*Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's; and unto God the things which be God's.*" This plainly intimated that the tribute was due to Cæsar; and yet, it did so in such a way, and with such explanations, as avoided the disadvantages of a direct, spontaneous, and unguarded declaration. The tax in question, which was, probably, the usual capitation or poll tax, was doubtless due, according to the constitution of the Roman empire, and it would be called for in the Roman, and not in the Jewish money. The qualification of rendering also to God the things which were God's was calculated to be satisfactory to every pious and conscientious mind. Our Lord may here have intended to distinguish between the tax imposed by the civil government for the state, and that required by the law of Moses for ecclesiastical purposes,† of half a shekel; and thus may have cautioned the Jews against withholding what the law of God and their own rulers called for, because of any other burden. He taught that, while they were to pay Cæsar's tribute,

\* Dr A. Clarke on Matt. xxii. 20.

† Exod. xxx. 13.

they were also to provide for the support of the Lord's temple, priesthood, and service. But the precept was of more extensive application, and taught them that they were to obey the laws of the supreme human government in temporal things, and yet, that they were to obey the laws of God in spiritual things. Though they were to pay Cæsar's tribute, they were not to adopt Cæsar's religion, nor, in any way, to sacrifice the true religion. They were to attend conscientiously to the honour of God and the salvation of their souls. And they were thus called on to give themselves up to God through Jesus, as the Messiah, that they might feel and act as God's, and so be his people indeed, enjoying his protection and favour on earth, and, at last, the heavenly happiness he has in store for them that serve and honour him.

So admirably did our Lord answer, that "*they could not take hold of his words before the people.*" They found no pretence, from what he said, to stir up the people against him as a betrayer of their liberties; nor did his answer furnish any ground for an accusation of disloyalty. "*And they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace:*" they were astonished at the wisdom and address which his answer discovered, and had nothing to say against him, or for themselves. Their hands, at the time, could not perform their enterprise. "They left him, and went their way,"\* discomfited and exposed.

It would have been well for them had they so profited by the interview, as to repent of their horrible purpose; but, such was their obstinate infatuation, that they afterwards accused Christ on the very matter with regard to which he had been so cautious and explicit. We read, in the beginning of the 23d chapter: "And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." But, however they failed to improve it, the answer was an admirable one, and was exactly suited to the two parties that assailed him. "It cautioned the Pharisees against using religion as a pretence for justifying sedition; and it warned the Herodians that they should not, as they were too inclinable to do, make a compliment of their religion to the Romans."†

It is an awakening thought, that the Lord Jesus is mar-

\* Matthew.

† Doddridge.

velled at by many who yet continue his enemies. There are many despisers, who hear, and wonder, and perish. Are there not among us many who cannot but feel the excellence and force of scriptural truths, when they are well stated, but who proceed no farther—who go away and continue disobedient? Let us beware of this. If we have now admired the wisdom of Christ's answer, let us improve it as a practical rule for ourselves; and, in doing so, let us give our serious attention to the two great classes of duties to which it calls us—the duties of *loyalty*, and the duties of *religion*—the duties we owe to our king, and the duties we owe to our God.

What, then, in the *first* place, and according to the more direct bearing of this passage, are the chief *duties we owe to the king*, as chief ruler?

1. We owe him the comprehensive duty of *honour*. This may be considered as included in the fifth commandment, and it is still more expressly enjoined in the words of Peter, in which the two branches of duty in question are brought closely together: "Fear God. Honour the king." It would be well, if princes had always that claim to be honoured by their subjects which arises from personal religious and moral worth. But, however it may be as to this, there is an honour due to the station they occupy in society under Providence. This honour primarily consists in an inward respect for them because of the office they fill; and it is outwardly manifested in a becoming way of speaking of them, and acting towards them. The violation of this respect is always sinful, and may become very injurious. "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought," says Solomon, "and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." "I wist not, brethren," said Paul, "that this was the high priest; for, it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Peter, too, ranks with "unjust men" who shall be "punished," those "who despise government," "and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." Not but that the crimes and errors of rulers may be noticed and blamed; for we often find the prophets sharply reproving wicked princes. But, speaking or writing of them with disapprobation, in order to be innocent, must have a foundation in truth—must be called for in point of duty—must proceed, not from malice, or envy, or a discontented disposition, but from the aim and reasonable ex-

pectation of doing good, and must be free from invective and violence, and moderate and respectful in manner and terms. So also, in action and demeanour, all reasonable marks of honour should be shown to rulers, according to the customs of their several countries.

2. We owe to Cæsar—to the king and government—the duty of *obedience to the laws*. On this point the language of Scripture is very full and express, and will not be overlooked by any conscientious person: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For, rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."—"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates."—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."\* There are, according to the opinion of the most enlightened, circumstances which justify resistance to rulers when they become tyrannical and oppressive, and when there is a promising opportunity of acquiring civil and religious liberty, and the blessing of a good and stable government. It is a very difficult and delicate question, however, to determine when such a crisis has arrived. Our standard of obedience to rulers, if scriptural, must be very high. If, under such a government as ours happily is, some measures meet with our disapprobation, there are various constitutional means to be resorted to; but resistance and violence must be totally out of the question. Compliance is our duty, except the commands should be positively sinful. We are bound to

\* Rom. xiii. 1; Tit. iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13.

obey in all things which are not contrary to the will of God.

3. We owe the king the duty of *payment of taxes*. From the support, and defence, and the security of property, liberty and life, which the government affords, it becomes both our interest and our duty to furnish the supplies necessary for carrying it on. In determining what belongs to Cæsar, what is his due, it is not left for us to refuse a tax because we think it not a proper one, but those taxes are binding on us which are imposed agreeably to the constitution of the country. If exemption can be had, or any change effected, by legal and constitutional means, we may seek it in that way, but not otherwise. Here, too, Scripture is very express: "For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom." \* We have also the example of our Lord paying tribute, and working a miracle to obtain the money for that purpose.† Now, if we hold the right principle on this subject, let us be careful to act on it. Let us pay the taxes, direct or indirect, actually required by the existing laws, honestly and conscientiously. Some defraud the revenue by importing, or manufacturing, or vending, articles on which a tax has not been paid which should have been paid, or by purchasing these articles, knowing them to be illicit. These things ought not so to be. If any person has withheld intentionally, or unwittingly, what was due, he ought to make restitution.

4. We owe our king and rulers the duty of *prayer*. This must appear to be a very necessary and important duty, whether we consider them as individuals, or as intimately connected with ourselves. They are beset with many dangers and temptations; their responsibility is weighty; the difficulty of executing their office faithfully and successfully is extreme; private and public interests are deeply involved in the consequences of their measures; and the extent of good, or of evil, which they may occasion to the civil and religious concerns of the community, is very great. All these circumstances show that prayer for them is especially called for. This, also, is expressly enjoined in Scripture. Paul thus writes to Timothy: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving

\* Rom. xiii. 6.

† Matt. xvii. 24.

of thanks, be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." This is a privilege which kings may well value at a high rate, and do much for religion to secure. Darius, following up the decree of Cyrus, ordered the necessary expenses for the rebuilding of the temple, and the worship of God at Jerusalem, to be furnished from the public revenues, "that they might offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." \* Even the wicked and persecuting heathen emperors of Rome were to be prayed for; how much more evident is it that we should pray, and that most heartily, for a king that professes Christianity, and respects the liberties and desires the happiness of his people!

But, all these duties to the king should be performed in consistency with *our duties to God*. While we render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, we should, *secondly*, render unto God the things which are God's. On this branch, which includes the whole of what is properly called religion, we cannot here enlarge. Two or three ideas, however, must be noticed, which the connection suggests. We are here taught, then, that when the commands of earthly rulers interfere with the will of the King of kings, they are to be disobeyed, at whatever hazard or loss. When the Jewish rulers commanded Peter and John not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, they said: † "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And when these rulers afterwards said to the apostles, "Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine," they answered with the same firmness as before, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Thus, the three Hebrew youths would not worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up; nor would Daniel, at Darius' decree, cease to kneel, and pray, and give thanks before his God, as he did afore-time. We are also here taught the necessity of religion, then, as well as of loyalty, and how they should accompany and assist each other. Some who have no appearance of religion, boast of their loyalty; and it would have been well had there never been any instances of sinful

\* Ezra vi. 10.

† Acts iv. 19, v. 29.



discontent and sedition under the cloak of religious profession. If we have true piety, it will certainly lead us to the conscientious discharge of our duties as subjects. As necessary in itself to our souls' safety, and as leading us to the steady and acceptable performance of every relative duty, let us render to God what belongs to him. In doing this, we must give ourselves to him. Let us surrender ourselves to him, according to the covenant of grace. Let us give up ourselves to him, to be saved in his appointed way, through faith in the merits of his Son, and to be guided and sanctified by his Word and Spirit. Let us render to him a due portion of our substance, for pious and charitable, and other useful purposes. Let us devote to him our time, talents, and influence. Let us render, restore, give back to him his own which he hath given to us. Let us do all to his glory. Let the language of our souls be: "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?"

*Finally*, The whole spirit of this twofold reply, as well as of the other parts of Scripture which bear on the subject, shows unanswerably (to adopt the language of an American divine),\* "*the groundlessness and folly of an observation repeated proverbially by multitudes of men in this and other countries, viz., That religion has nothing to do with politics, or, in other words, with government.*" Beyond all reasonable debate, the whole vindicable conduct of rulers towards their subjects, and of subjects towards their rulers, is nothing but a mere collection of duties, objects of moral obligation, required by God, and indispensably owed to him by men. The Christian religion, therefore, the rule of all duty, and involving all moral obligation, is so far from having nothing to do with this subject, that it is inseparably interwoven with every part of it. Accordingly, the Bible regulates, and, were it not sinfully prevented from its proper influence, would exactly and entirely control, all the political doctrines and actions of men. It is, indeed, as easy and as common to deny truth, and to refuse to perform our duty, to disobey God and injure men, in political concerns as in any other. In truth, there has been no field of iniquity more extensive than this—none in which more enormous crimes, or more terrible sufferings, have existed. All these crimes and sufferings have sprung from the ignorance or the disobedience of the Scriptures. Were they allowed to govern the political conduct of mankind, both the crimes

\* Dr Dwight, of the United States.

and the sufferings would vanish, every duty both of rulers and subjects would be performed, and every interest would be completely secured. In what manner the doctrine against which I am contending ever came to be received by any man who was not peculiarly weak, or wicked, I am at a loss to determine. It would seem that even the careless and gross examination of the most heedless reflector must have evinced both its folly and falsehood. A dream is not more unfounded; the decisions of frenzy are not more wild. To villains in power, or in pursuit of power, office, and public plunder, it is undoubtedly a most convenient doctrine, as it will quiet the reproaches of conscience, where conscience has not ceased to reproach; and throw the gate which opens to every crime and selfish gratification from its hinges. To subjects, to a state, to a nation, it is literally fatal. The people who have adopted it may be certainly pronounced to have bidden a final adieu to their peace and their happiness, their virtue and their safety."

## LECTURE CVII.

## LUKE XX. 27-40.

"Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: 35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. 39. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all."

CREATURES on the brink of the grave should not forget it, nor refuse to look into it. Those who are soon to quit the world's shores, and all its connections and occupations, and to launch away for other regions, ought to sit loose to it, to be habitually taking leave of it, and to be ready to make their passage safely into an unchangeable state. But it is too often the very reverse with them. They generally feel and act as if every thing earthly were steady, as if no removal were before them, as if they were to remain here for ever. This grievous error, and their consequent misplaced and excessive attachment to the world, arise, as from their general natural blindness and depravity, so, more especially, from their forming too high an estimate of the value of the things of time, and too low an estimate of the value of the things of eternity. It seems as if, with them, nearness and sight rendered the things which are seen and temporal most

weighty and precious, and as if a short distance which will soon be passed over, and a slight interposing veil which will soon be removed, rendered the things which are unseen and eternal most light and worthless. It is with them as if the occurrences of the present were the verities of day, and the anticipations of the future the dreams of night; as if wisdom consisted in minding only what is before their eyes, and as if the way to fit them for the prosecution of the business, and the enjoyment of the relations of life, were to banish every serious thought of a hereafter. But there is an unspeakable reality in futurity; and, while a proper regard to it is necessary to our true interest and happiness in every way, now and for ever, it leads to the affectionate and faithful discharge of the duties of the various relations of life, greatly endears these relations as long as they last, and furnishes us with topics of consolation to support our minds under the bereavements to which, in consequence of these relations, we are subjected. And yet there are persons who would deprive us of these motives and consolations, who would wrest from us the hopes of the gospel, while they have nothing to offer us in their place! Such are modern infidels; and such were the Sadducees of old.

The emissaries of the Pharisees and Herodians, the other two Jewish sects mentioned in Scripture, had just been put to silence by our Lord, on the subject of tribute-money. The enemies of the truth, however, all unite in opposing it, though they should unite in nothing else; and they are indefatigable in their schemes. "*Then came to him certain of the Sadducees:*" or, according to Matthew,\* "*The same day,*" that is, the very day in which he had been attacked by the chief priests and scribes, who, as also appears from Matthew, were of the Pharisees and Herodians, "*the same day came to him the Sadducees,*" "*who*" (as it is here) "*deny that there is any resurrection.*"

As this is the first, and, indeed, the only time that the Sadducees are expressly mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, this is the proper place for noticing their origin and sentiments.† They derived their name from their founder, Sadoc, who lived between two and three hundred years before the Christian era. Sadoc was a disciple of Antigonus, who was the president of the Sanhedrim, and teacher of the chief school of divinity in Jerusalem. It was a favourite doctrine of Antigonus, that men ought not to serve God in

\* Matt. xxii. 23.

† See Prideaux, Calmet, Josephus, &c.

a slavish spirit, but only from filial fear and love; in which there was, doubtless, much truth, though an enlightened regard to self-interest is not to be excluded from the motives of human action. But, in this case, as it has happened in many other, the disciple went far beyond the master, and carried his doctrine to a heretical and very hurtful extreme. He inferred from it that there were no rewards nor punishments after this life; and at last he and his adherents, separating into a new sect, held that there was no resurrection, nor future state of existence for man at all; that man had no soul in the usual sense of the word, no immortal principle distinct from the body, and that, however common language might seem to countenance it, the popular idea of angels was erroneous, there being no such beings in reality. When Paul was pleading his cause before the council at Jerusalem,\* “he perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, and he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And, when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.” Thus, the opinions of the Sadducees resembled those of the heathen sect of Epicureans, though the Sadducees did not with them deny that the world was created by God. Josephus,† however, says—“For the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say that there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly:” which is, in fact, to say that they denied the two great doctrines of practical religion—providence and divine grace. According to such a system, which excluded providence and grace in this world, and their accountableness in the next, not a particle of true religion could exist. Yet, they were strict in their observance of the letter of the law of Moses, in some respects, and held that its violators should be severely punished in this life. They also rejected oral traditions,

\* Acts xxiii. 6.

† Antiq. XIII. v. 9, x. 6, xvii. 1, 5; and XX. ix. 1. Though the Sadducees did not, as some say, reject, they seem to have paid less regard to the other books of the Old Testament, than to those of Moses.

and acknowledged only the written Word as a rule. In the words of the Jewish historian, "The sect of the Sadducees are quite contrary in their notions to the Pharisees."—"What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written Word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers; and, concerning these things it is, that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side." The same historian also says, in another place, "The doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent; but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity; but they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for, when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly, and by force, sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them." But though their opinions were by no means popular, and though the historian speaks in this way of their aversion to public office, they had sometimes great influence, having the high priest himself of their party, and being able to command the decisions of the Sanhedrim. The high priest, John Hyrcanus, for example, left the sect of the Pharisees for that of the Sadducees: and Ananus, or Annas the younger, was also a Sadducee. We also read as follows, in the 5th chapter of the Acts, from the 17th verse: "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison." So, it not unfrequently happens, that worldly and irreligious men, who, with the boast of great rationality and freedom from superstition, reject the real doctrines of revelation, and are almost, perhaps altogether, infidels at the heart, by sacrificing the truth in one instance, and supporting it externally in another, as it suits their

purpose, contrive to obtain a great lead in public affairs. Men of some note arose among the Jews, from time to time, in latter ages, to espouse the principles of the Sadducees, who were justly counted heretics by the great body of their brethren. There are said to be few avowed Sadducees, but it is universally understood that there is much infidelity among the Jews of the present day.

To return to the passage under consideration: Some of the Sadducees came to Christ as he was teaching in the temple, and, in the malevolent hope of exposing him, put to him a question, which they were, probably, accustomed to press against those who differed with them, as they knew Jesus did, on the subject of the resurrection and the life to come. The question was founded on the well-known law of Moses, written in Deut. xxv. 5. That law, as there and here stated, was to the following effect: If a man died, leaving behind him a widow, but no children, his brother or nearest relation was to marry the widow, and the first son he had by her was to be legally accounted the son of her first husband, to inherit his property, and to be entered as his son in the genealogical record. Thus, the name and family of the first husband were preserved, and his inheritance was prevented from passing into a different family. The reason of this very singular law is thus apparent. It was to preserve the inheritance of the different tribes and families distinct, for the greater facility of keeping a correct table of genealogy, according to the genius of the whole of the Jewish religion, and especially for preventing any mistake, or uncertainty, as to the tribe and family of Messiah. It is obvious, therefore, that the law is to be considered as altogether peculiar to the Jewish people, its reasons not applying to any other nation. Indeed, not only would such a custom be contrary to our feelings of propriety and duty, but it was, though enjoined on the Jews in this particular case, in opposition to the general precept of the Mosaic law itself, which expressly forbade a man to marry his brother's wife.\*

The Sadducees, then, with reference to this very peculiar law, state a case which might be either supposed or real (for something like it, at least, would frequently occur), of seven brothers being married in succession to the same woman, and all dying before her, without leaving any children by her. "*Last of all the woman died also,*" and, as

\* Lev. xviii. 16.

must be supposed, without having been married into any other family. On this case, the Sadducees requested our Lord to say which of the seven should have her as his wife after the resurrection; for, as they had all been related to her in the same way in this world, they seemed to have all an equal title to claim her in the next.\* On the supposition of there being a future state, and of that state being like the present, the Sadducees intimated that there would be an insuperable difficulty in determining the question, and that the doctrine of the resurrection was thus overthrown, by being reduced to an absurdity. They could not bring fair arguments against the doctrine, nor did they apply, as sincere inquirers, for the purpose of receiving instruction; but they disingenuously endeavoured to shake the belief of the doctrine by perplexing and entangling it.

Let us hear, however, our Lord's reply. Taking in what is supplied in the parallel passage of Matthew,† we find that Jesus "answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." The right knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures is the source of all real religion, whether doctrinal or practical. Ignorance of their letter, and ignorance of their true meaning, equally lead to error. Had the Sadducees attended to the Old Testament, they could not have fallen into the gross heresy in question. They would have learned the doctrine of the resurrection from Job, and David, and Daniel,‡ as well as from the passage which our Lord afterwards quotes. The Scriptures taught the doctrine plainly, and gave no such absurd and contradictory view of it as the Sadducees supposed. Their heresy was most pernicious and inexcusable; and the way in which they now attempted to defend it was very unfair, namely, that of taking up a false view of the nature of a future state, and then reasoning against it on that view. They took up the idea that the state of saints after the resurrection, if any such state there were, was a state very like the present, and one in which the enjoyment consisted much in the pleasures of sense and of animal life. This is exactly the Mohammedan notion of paradise; and the Pharisees appear to have been somewhat tainted with it. Carnal minds entertain, in many respects, erroneous views of spiritual and eternal things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of

\* Doddridge.

† Matt. xxii. 29.

‡ Ps. xvi. 9 to the end; Job xix. 25; Dan. xii. 2.



God; they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The antidote to all such errors is the truth of God's Word, seen in the light of the illumination of his Spirit. "Ye do err, not knowing" "the power of God." "God hath spoken once," says the Psalmist; "twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." The Lord "can do everything:" "Nothing is too hard for him." Had this been properly considered by these Sadducees, every difficulty which appeared to them to attend the doctrine of the resurrection would have vanished. Different answers may be given to different difficulties which have been alleged to beset the doctrine; but one triumphant answer to them all is found in the almighty power of God. The power that is seen in reviving nature in spring, is able to revive our bodies from the winter of the grave. The power which formed the body out of the dust, and breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, and united his body and soul at first, and which preserves both body and soul for years on earth, is surely able to preserve the soul when separated from the body, to raise up the body from the dust again, and to unite both body and soul, never more to be separated. This argument ought to have satisfied these Sadducees; and it may well come home with still greater conviction to our minds, illustrated as it is by the resurrection of Christ, and the consequent reasonings of the New Testament. When we consider "the working of God's mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand," we see the strongest proof of his ability and intention to effect the glorious resurrection of all his people. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"—"If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"—"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."

Our Lord then proceeds to say, in reply to the Sadducees, "*The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage.*" By "the children of this world," we are here to understand the people of this world, without any distinction of character: no such distinction is intended here as is expressed in the saying, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The word "marry," applies to the men; and the phrase "given

in marriage," to the women. With reference to the power fathers exercised over their daughters, alluded to by the apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, of what was good for the present times of distress, he says, "He that giveth her (his daughter) in marriage, doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage, doeth better." Marriage is common in this world, according to God's wise appointment.

"*But they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.*" By "that world," we are to understand heaven; and by "the resurrection from the dead," a happy and glorious resurrection. They who shall be "accounted worthy to obtain" that blessed state, are they who, by faith, are interested in the merits of the Redeemer, who purchased it for them, and who have a fitness of character, through the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It is ever to be remembered, both that they who are "before the throne," "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and also that "there shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth." The clause also intimates some difficulty in obtaining it, and some danger of coming short.\* The blessed inhabitants of heaven are very differently situated, in many respects, from what they were on earth; in particular, they do not marry. The ends for which marriage was instituted do not exist in heaven, and, therefore, the practice is unknown. No remedy for irregularities can be necessary where all is perfect holiness. That world, being supplied with its human inhabitants from this, needs no other means to replenish it; and, where none shall be removed by death, there can be no occasion for marriage to repair its ravages. "*Neither can they die any more,*" adds our Lord. Now, what might seem, on a hasty view, and judging after the present manner of men, to be a defect, is one of the many instances of the perfection of heaven. Many as are the comforts, and important as are the advantages, of the married state on earth, the redeemed are still happier where it is unknown. At the best it is a mixture of comforts and cares, of joys and sorrows; and in every case, it is entered into with the painful certainty that its bonds are to be broken by the king of terrors. In heaven, all that is perfect in human intercourse will continue, and

\* Henry.

all that is imperfect will be done away. If there are no weddings in heaven, there are no deaths. If there are no births, there are no funerals. If the voice of the bridegroom and the bride is never heard there, neither is the voice of lamentation and weeping.

There is neither marriage nor death among them, "*For they are equal unto the angels.*" This declaration does not necessarily imply that there is an absolute equality, in all respects, between the saints and angels in heaven. The expression, in Matthew and Mark, is, that they, the saints, are "*as the angels,*" that is, like them.\* They are like them, nay, strictly equal to them, in respect of the circumstances here mentioned, namely, their not marrying and not dying; and they are, doubtless, equal to them in some other respects—for example, in holiness. They are like them as having the same abode, the same society, the same employments, the same joys. There are different degrees of glory, even among the redeemed themselves, as there are among the angels. In some things, the one race of beings may be superior; in others, the other; the angels, for instance, in the powers with which they were created; the redeemed, in their relation to the Son of God. But envy and jealousy are unknown. In the perfect knowledge that everything is exactly as it ought to be, the circumstantial variety, and the essential harmony, will equally enhance the beauty, and interest, and enjoyment of the scene.

They are equal unto the angels, "*And are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*" God's people are his children by adoption; and their adoption necessarily includes the promise, and will, at last, bring them to the possession, of the inheritance of eternal life; "for, if they are children, then they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." But it is at the resurrection that they enter on the full possession of their inheritance. Their sonship secures, and is completed by their great, and, in some respects, inconceivable happiness, at the last day. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

As, therefore, there was to be no more marriage, nor death, nor imperfection, in heaven, it followed, that the objection to the doctrine of the resurrection, brought for-

\* Matt. xxii. 30, and Mark xii. 25, *ὡς ἄγγελοι*. Luke, *ἰσαγγελοι*, "angel-like."—*Dr Campbell*.

ward with so much confidence by the Sadducees, was a mere cavil, and that the difficulty they spoke of as insurmountable, could never have the slightest foundation in fact.

But our Lord does not rest with obviating the particular difficulty; urged by the Sadducees, nor with the assertion that the doctrine of the resurrection was taught in the Word of God: he brings forward a particular passage in support of the general doctrine, and that from the writings of Moses, which the Sadducees esteemed to be of the greatest authority, and peculiarly conclusive, though they did not reject the other books of the Old Testament.\* Referring to Exod. iii. 6, Jesus said, "*Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" Jehovah was their God in covenant. He said to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This covenant included the promise of the earthly Canaan to the nation, and of the heavenly Canaan to Abraham and those who were his children by faith. Now, be it remembered, that, when the Lord spoke these words at the burning bush, these three patriarchs had been dead for a long time, Abraham for more than three hundred years; yet the Lord then declared that he was still their God. He was, and is, and ever will be, the God of his people. But, as Christ remarks on the designation, "*He is not a God of the dead, but of the living.*" He is not, and, therefore, he cannot, with any propriety, be called, the God of the dead—of those who are dead in every sense, of those who have no existence, of those who are annihilated; but he is the God of the living—of those who, however long they may have been dead to this world, are alive to God in the other. "*For,*" adds Christ, "*all live unto him;*" that is, all the pious dead. Whatever the Sadducees might pretend, the doctrine of a future state was understood and held by the great body of the Jews as a part of their creed. There is a remarkable passage, in Josephus' account of the Maccabees, which proves that the best informed Jews believed that the souls of righteous men were in the presence of God in a state of happiness:—" *They who lose their lives*

\* Drusius, De Tribus Sectis, iii. 9; Reland, Antiq. ii. 11; Scaliger, Elench. chap. 16.

*for the sake of God, live unto God, as do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs.*" And one not less remarkable, in an ancient Jewish writing, in which the prevalence of vain human traditions is curiously manifested:—"Rabbi Abbin saith, The Lord said unto Moses, Find me out ten righteous persons among the people, and I will not destroy thy people. Then said Moses, Behold I, Aaron, Eleazar, Ithamar, Phineas, Caleb, and Joshua. But God said, Here are but seven, where are the other three? When Moses knew not what to do, he said, O eternal God, do those live that are dead? Yes, said God. Then said Moses, If those that are dead do live, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."\*

The force of the argument from this quotation from Exodus, lies also much in this, that it would be unworthy of Jehovah to sustain the high relation of a God to those whom he was to desert at death, and allow to sink into nothing, nay, to those whom he was not to render happy with himself, both in their bodies and in their souls, for ever. In the language of the apostle to the Hebrews,† respecting the Old Testament worthies: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." Thus, the whole doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body was taught by Moses himself, whom, with all their professions of respect for his authority, the Sadducees, in this instance, altogether disregarded. Though not convinced, they seem to have been now silenced.

"*Then certain of the scribes,*" who, generally, were of the sect of the Pharisees, being gratified to hear their own doctrine so well defended, "*answering, said, Master, thou hast well said.*" Matthew mentions that "when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at Christ's doctrine." And Luke follows up the account with these words, "*And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.*" This must be limited to the Sadducees; for, when we compare the parallel passages of Matthew and Mark, we find that, immediately after this, the Pharisees put a tempting question to him, about what was the greatest commandment in the law. Mark then says, "No man after that durst ask him any question:" that is, none of his enemies, whether of the Pharisees or Sadducees, or any other description, presumed,

\* Dr Adam Clarke *in locum*.

† Heb. xi. 16.

or ventured, after that, to put any ensnaring question to him.

In reviewing this passage, let us, 1st, *Be reminded that we have persons resembling the Sadducees in our own times.* There are some who seek to subvert the leading truths of religion; and the method they pursue is very like that followed by the Sadducees of old. They rarely make the attack openly, like honest and generous assailants; but, they start difficulties, and endeavour to involve the subjects of inquiry in inextricable perplexity. They take up false views of doctrines, and will not be at the pains, or will not be so fair, as to receive correct information; and then they argue against these false views, as if they were the true. They draw, not a correct likeness, but a caricature, of Christianity, and then ridicule it. They invent absurdities of their own, and then impute them to heavenly wisdom. Let us avoid everything of this kind in ourselves, and guard against it in others. Says Paul to Timothy, "Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called: which some professing, have erred concerning the faith."—"And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already: and overthrow the faith of some." To avoid this danger, let us be diligent to know the Scriptures, and the power of God; that we may oppose to the suggestions of infidelity the declarations of revelation, and, especially, those relating to Jehovah's omnipotence. Let us not stagger at any of the promises of God through unbelief; but, let us be "strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform."

2. *Let us be suitably affected by the doctrines of immortality and the resurrection here taught.* How low and grovelling the mind of the infidel, who would be contented to live without God, and without good hope in the world, and then to die like the beasts that perish! Poor indeed is his hope of annihilation; and, poor as it is, it shall be utterly blasted. Let us be thankful for the light which the Word of God throws on futurity, and often put to ourselves the question, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Let us, especially, be thankful for the strong light in which the doctrine of the resurrection is put in the New Testament. Let us think of its credibility,

its certainty, and its amazing circumstances and consequences. Let us prepare for it by the reception of the gospel, and by the submission of our hearts and lives to the grace and government of the Redeemer. "Let our conversation be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Once more, Let us improve this passage in reference to *the endearing relations of life*. We are here reminded that death is coming to break them all up, and that short is the time we are to sustain them. Far be it from us to regard them with indifference. Religion requires us to fulfil their duties with all affection and faithfulness. Yet, they are of very limited duration, and very little value, in comparison of eternity. "What is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Let us not, then, so set our hearts on these relations, as to neglect our salvation; let us not give to any connection such a place in our affections as shall keep the chief place from Christ. "He that loveth father or mother," saith he, "more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Divested of the special application to the times of distress in which they were written, there still remains something universally instructive in the words of the apostle, "He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife;" "and she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." But, however those who are thus connected may properly study each other's wishes, neither of them should so far defer to the other, as to neglect the gospel, or act unworthily of the Christian name. Is it so that these relations shall not exist in the other world? Then we should surely seek to be connected with those who are dear to us by the tie that shall never be broken. But what is that tie? Is it the tie of sinful, or even of innocent, mere human attachment? Is it the tie of common friendship? Is it the tie of similarity of pursuits and sentiments, in reference to earthly things? Is it the tie of parents and children, or of brothers and sisters, or of husband and wife? No. It is none of all these. Those who have been connected in these ways shall often be stationed, hereafter, far apart, with the great gulf

between them. It is the tie of grace alone which will prove everlasting—the tie of real, personal religion: it is the being so connected with God the Father through Jesus Christ, our elder brother, as to form part of his redeemed and adopted family. This alone can secure, but this will certainly and most completely secure, our living happily together in the same heaven for ever, though the present relations of life shall cease. Let us, then, most anxiously seek the formation of this tie with all whom we esteem and love; and let this be especially sought by those who are very nearly related to each other by blood, and by those who are partners by marriage. Lord, grant that we may all be suitably impressed by the affecting thought that all our present relations are to be dissolved. Lord, enable us all to prepare for that eternal state in which they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. “This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”



## LECTURE CVIII.

## LUKE XX. 41-47.

“And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David’s son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 44. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son? 45. ¶ Then in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, 46. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; 47. Which devour widows’ houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.”

THIS passage contains two distinct topics—our Lord’s question respecting the person of the Messiah, and his caution against the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. In our last lecture we considered his admirable reply to the captious question of the Sadducees on the subject of the resurrection; so completely were they answered and confuted, that they were silenced, and did not venture to interrogate him afterwards. The Pharisees, however, as we noticed before, from Matthew and Mark, came forward again, and asked him which was the greatest commandment of the law, on which he told them not only the first and great commandment, but the second also, which was like it—the former consisting in love to God, and the latter in love to man. Having thus triumphantly replied to all the ensnaring questions of his adversaries, he turns round on them, and proceeds to examine them, as in the passage just read. We have the same history in Matthew and Mark.\* Matthew’s account is somewhat more circumstantial than that of the other two evangelists. It begins thus: “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ?”

This was an important question indeed, and one which we should consider him as putting to us. Do we think of him, then, at all? do we turn our minds towards him with

\* Matt. xxii. 41 to the end; Mark xii. 35-37.

anything that deserves the name of thought? It is one of the characteristics of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts;" but believers are exhorted to "think on these things." Let us beware lest what relates to him be as if it were nothing to us. Or, if we do think of him, do we think meanly of him? There are many to whom he presents "no form or comeliness, no beauty that they should desire him." All who are his think very highly of him. "To them that believe he is precious;" he is "all and in all." What do we think of the constitution of his person, of his character, and of his mediatorial work? Are our views on these vital subjects scriptural in themselves? and are they held by us in faith, and so as to be influential on our heart and conduct? Do we receive him in all his offices? Do we practically deem him worthy of all reverence, trust, love, and obedience? Our deliberate judgment of Christ will give the tone to all our other opinions, and even determine our state and character before God, and regulate our affections and lives. May the Lord enable us to adopt and hold fast sound sentiments on this grand topic. ¶ We find, then, that it was the Pharisees our Lord now began to catechise; and they were, probably, attended, as usual, by some of the scribes, or teachers of the law, who joined them in their opposition to him. He took them, not singly, nor a few at a time, but "while they were gathered together," and in a strong body. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces."—"Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand." Mark mentions, also, that this took place while Jesus still "taught in the temple." Our Lord asked their opinion of Christ—what ideas they entertained of the Messiah; and he expressly put to them the question, "Whose son is he?"\* To this question they replied readily, "They say unto him, The son of David." There could be no difficulty in answering this question, as it related to a point universally understood and acknowledged by the Jews, namely, that Messiah, when he came, was to be of David's family. For this they had the best authority, seeing God had promised to David that he would raise up of his seed to sit on his throne for ever; in other words, to establish his dynasty for ever in the kingdom of Messiah;† and had afterwards thus spoken explicitly, by

\* Matthew. † 2 Sam. vii. 12-16; Ps. lxxxix. 4, 29, 36; Isa. xi. 1.

Isaiah, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse" (David's father), "and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him."—"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." The universal expectation was in conformity with this prediction. Thus, when Jesus was teaching in the temple, at an earlier period, there arose a dispute as to whether he was the Christ, and then some said, what none called in question, "Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David?"\* And, in acknowledging Jesus as Messiah, various persons addressed him by the title of the Son of David, which came to be one of the proper names of the Christ. Thus, the blind man, near Jericho, exclaimed, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" and the multitude, at his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Before proceeding farther, let us here remark one proof, or, at least, important step in the proof that Jesus is indeed the Christ. That he was of the family of David is clearly shown in the recorded genealogy. None of his enemies denied this; though, if they could have disproved it, they certainly would, as that would at once have completely overturned his claim. Jesus of Nazareth came while the authentic and publicly acknowledged Jewish records of genealogy were in existence; he was proved by these records to be of the family of David; this was only one of many marks meeting in him, which were justly expected to be found in the Messiah; and, if he was not the Messiah, no other person has yet appeared who can claim the title with any show of truth. Nay, more, in consequence of the overthrow and dispersion of their nation, the Jews have found it impracticable to keep any exact and complete genealogical tables; they, in fact, have none such now that can be depended on, nor do they even pretend to have them. Therefore, on the groundless supposition that the Messiah were yet to come, it would be impossible satisfactorily to establish his descent from David, and thus one necessary part of the proof of his Messiahship would be wanting. Surely Jesus of Nazareth is he; and it is vain for the Jews to look for another.

Turning now to the account as it is in Luke, we read,

\* John vii. 42.

"*And he said unto them,*" that is, chiefly to the Pharisees, "*How say they,*" or, as in Mark, "*How say the scribes,*" "*that Christ is David's son?*" In this, our Lord by no means calls in question the correctness of the doctrine commonly entertained by the Jews on this subject, for we have already seen that nothing could be more plain than that the Scriptures declared that the Messiah was to be the descendant of David; but he examines the Pharisees and their supporters, as to their proper understanding of that doctrine, and he calls on them to explain how it could hold true, consistently with another doctrine also clearly taught in Scripture. "*How say they that Christ is David's son,*" "*And,*" or, yet, "*David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?*" Our Lord said, according to Matthew, that David said this "in Spirit," or, according to Mark, "by the Holy Ghost." He appealed, you observe, to David's language as decisive authority, and that because he was guided by the Spirit of prophecy, by the impulse of the Holy Ghost. Hence must be inferred the full inspiration of the written Psalms, and not only of them, but of the whole of the Old Testament, and, by parity of reason, the whole of the New Testament—the whole of what was spoken and written under divine suggestion and superintendence by the apostles and other disciples, who had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. David thus speaks of himself: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue;"\* and, more generally, in the words of Peter:† "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas."—"The Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."—"The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Let us reverence the Holy Scriptures, as the dictates of the Eternal Spirit; and let us consult them with care, and submit all our opinions to their decision.

The words under consideration are taken exactly from the beginning of the 110th Psalm. That Psalm is a striking prophecy of the Messiah, and contains a summary of the doctrines of his divinity, of his kingly and priestly offices, of

\* 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

† Acts i. 16; 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 21.

his humiliation, and of his exaltation and glorious triumphs. It is repeatedly quoted, and applied to our Saviour, in the New Testament. Moreover, the Jews of old universally considered it as referring to the Messiah, though the generality of them denied that it pointed to Jesus of Nazareth. It was never denied to apply to Messiah, till unbelieving Jews, in subsequent ages, found it convenient to try, by previously unheard-of and most contradictory and absurd interpretations, to get rid of its testimony in favour of Christianity. David, by inspiration, calls the Messiah his "Lord." "The Lord," that is, in the original, Jehovah, "said unto my Lord." On this we may observe that there is here a plain distinction of persons between God the Father and God the Son; while an argument for the Godhead of the Messiah is drawn from the passage as follows: "David speaks of some person much greater than himself, whom he calls his Lord; but this can be no other but the Lord Christ of whom he here prophesies, not, as he was wont to do elsewhere, with respect to himself, in the first place, as his type and figure, but in plain words, which can belong to none but Christ alone; for no other king but he can be said, in any sense, to sit at God's right hand, nor was there any priest after the order of Melchizedek that could be a shadow of him."\* "If Messiah was to be a mere man, who was to have no existence till many ages after David's death, with what propriety could his progenitor call him his Lord," even in the lowest sense of the word? "for he could not possibly owe him any subjection. If Jesse had lived till David was established in the kingdom, David might, in some good sense, have been called Jesse's lord, though Jesse's son; but could David, with any propriety, be called the lord of Boaz, Judah, Abraham, Noah, and Adam, his progenitors? Yet this would be quite as reasonable as to call the Messiah David's Lord, if he had no existence till a thousand years after David's death. And who, even if existing at that time, could be called David's lord, at the summit of his exaltation as the Lord's anointed king of Israel, except the Lord of all?"†

Our Saviour then asked, how, when David called the Messiah his Lord, he was also his son. On this it is expressly stated, in Matthew, that "no man," or, none of them, "was able to answer Jesus a word." The scribes and Pharisees were confounded with the question, and could

\* Bishop Patrick.

† Scott.

not reply to it in any way. They were blinded by the carnal expectation of the Messiah coming as a mere man and temporal deliverer; and were ignorant of him as a divine and spiritual Redeemer, a Saviour from sin. Therefore, though they allowed that the 110th Psalm related to the Messiah, and that he was therein called David's Lord, and though they always held that he was to be David's son, they had no idea, and could not explain, how these things could be.

But surely, even a babe in Christian knowledge can now answer the question which nonplused these proud Pharisees and doctors. There is but one consistent explanation of the doctrine of Messiah's person, namely, that he is both God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person. He is David's Lord, as to his divine nature; and David's son, as to his human. He is David's Lord, as his redeeming God in whom he trusted, and whom he obeyed; and he is David's son, as his lineal descendant according to the flesh.

This is, doubtless, the doctrine which our Lord had immediately in view in the quotation; yet, it is not to be overlooked that it is prophetic of the exaltation and triumphs of the Messiah. We know how the words, "Sit thou at my right hand," have been already fulfilled in our Lord's ascension into heaven. His sitting implies rest and authority; and "the right hand," in contradistinction to the left, implies the highest honour. "God hath raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, gives this excellent commentary on the words, showing how they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and had no reference to David: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into heaven; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The expression, "making

his enemies his footstool," signifies their being completely subdued under him, and may refer to such an emblematical action as that of Joshua's captains, who, at his command, put their feet on the necks of the five vanquished kings.\* This part of the prophecy is in the course of fulfilment, and will be fully accomplished at last. Many of Christ's enemies have already been put under his feet; and all of them will ultimately be so, either in the way of conversion, or in the way of total overthrow and condemnation. Many rebellious sinners of mankind have already been happily brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; his triumphs, in this gracious way, will yet spread wider and wider, and all who do not bend to the sceptre of his grace, shall be broken in pieces by the rod of his anger. He has also overcome the world: and this is the victory that enables his people to overcome through him, even their faith. Satan; too, is his conquered enemy, and will shortly be bruised under his people's feet, and utterly overthrown, and consigned by him to endless imprisonment. "He shall tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shall he trample under feet."—"He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death:"† for "he shall swallow up death in victory."

In improving this part of the passage, *mark well the important and glorious doctrines of Scripture respecting Christ's two natures—his divine nature, and his human nature—constituting his one person as Mediator.*

Observe, first, the blessed doctrine of *Messiah's Godhead*. His deity was, in every way, necessary to his being a Saviour of sinners: in particular, it was necessary to give sufficient, even infinite value to his obedience and sacrifice, and necessary to his having power to save. And, as this is so important a doctrine, its scriptural evidence is very full and varied. The following is an outline of that evidence:—*Christ is superior to all prophets and priests.* He is superior to Moses: "This man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house."—"Moses verily was faithful as a servant," "but Christ as a Son."—"God who spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." David, the king, and

\* Josh. x. 24.

† 1 Cor. xv. 25, 54.

prophet, and sweet psalmist of Israel, calls him his Lord. "A greater than Jonas, and a greater than Solomon, is here."—"The law maketh men priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."\* *He is superior to angels*: "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" The *names* of God are given to him. For example, *God*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—"Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" and *Jehovah*: "This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord," or Jehovah, "our righteousness." The *attributes* of God are ascribed to him—*eternity*: "Before Abraham was, I am;" *omniscience*: "Lord, thou knowest all things," said Peter; *omnipresence*: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" *omnipotence*: He is "The mighty God;" *holiness and justice*: "Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just;" *truth*: He is "the way, the truth, and the life," "the faithful and true Witness." The *works* of God are ascribed to him. The work of *creation*: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him."—"By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." The work of *providence*: "The government shall be on his shoulder."—"He upholds all things by the word of his power."—"He is the Prince of the kings of the earth." The work of *redemption*, which work requires divine perfections: Our "Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;" and he is called "The only wise God, our Saviour," and "God and our Saviour," or rather, our God and Saviour, or, the God and Saviour of us, "Jesus Christ;"\* and the work or office of *judgment*, which also plainly requires omniscience, and of which it is written, both that "God is judge himself," and also, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." *Divine worship* is paid, and commanded to be paid to him: "My Lord, and my God," said Thomas;—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," said Stephen;—"All men should honour

\* Heb. iii. 3, i. 1, &c.

† Jude 25; 2 Pet. i. 1, Greek.



the Son, even as they honour the Father.”—“ When he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”—“ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” There are, besides, many other descriptions of him, not easily reducible to any of these heads, which are demonstrations of his divine nature; among these may be mentioned the following: “ Who being the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person.”—“ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”—“ I and my Father are one.”

Mark, in the second place, Christ’s true *humanity*, as the son of David. This doctrine is equally essential with the other. It forms the foundation of all he did and suffered for us; and it is most advantageous, and most honourable to our nature. His human nature is entire, consisting of both soul and body: “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful,” and, “ A body hast thou prepared for me,” said he. Of vast importance, too, is the circumstance, that, while he is like us in every other respect, he is altogether unlike us in one, namely, in his being free from sin. As his conception was miraculous, he was free from original sin, “ Therefore,” said the angel to Mary, “ that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God:” he was, from first to last, free from sin, in fact, in inclination, and in possibility. Thus, and thus alone, by being a man, and yet a sinless man, he could so become our surety, as to have our sin imputed to him, that he might atone for it by suffering unto death; and thus alone was he qualified to set us an example in every way suitable, and to sympathize fully with us in our sorrows. And so it is that the Scriptures teach us to conceive of his human nature: “ Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”—“ For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”—“ We have not an high priest who cannot be touched

with the feeling of our infirmities; but" one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But, though our Lord's two natures may thus be viewed separately, they are not separated from each other in fact. Observe, then, still farther, how they are perfectly united in all their distinctness, without being in any degree confounded. They meet so as to constitute the one person of the Mediator. This explains some things which would otherwise appear irreconcilable; as when Christ says, "My Father is greater than I," and yet his inspired apostle says, that he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This, too, represents him as perfectly qualified for the whole of his mediatorial undertaking. This union of the two natures in the one person is taught in such passages as these: "They shall call his name Immanuel; which, being interpreted, is, God with us."—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," "and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace."—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."—"Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

Let us admire and improve the different excellencies which thus meet in the Redeemer's person, character, and work. He is David's Lord, and David's son. He is "the root and the offspring of David."\* He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." There meet in him such diverse excellencies as the following:—Perfect divinity, and perfect humanity; "infinite highness, and infinite condescension; infinite majesty, and transcendent meekness; infinite justice, and infinite grace; the deepest reverence towards God, and equality with God; an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth; absolute sovereignty, and perfect resignation; self-sufficiency, and an entire reliance on God;† perfect holiness, and accumulated guilt by imputation; the most exalted honour, and the greatest reproach; perfect happiness, and sufferings unparalleled. These excellencies shone out in his life and death on earth; they are still manifested, as far as is possible and appropriate, in his present state of exaltation; and they will, in like manner, fully appear, in their results, at the great day of judgment, and through endless ages. Say, then, if

\* Rev. xxii. 16.

† Edwards' Discourse on the Excellency of Christ.

the consideration of these united excellencies should not prevail with you all to receive him as your Saviour and Lord? There is in him all that you can reasonably desire, and all that you can ever need. Doubt not of his ability, or of his willingness, to help you. He invites you to come to him by all these varied excellencies; and, as arrayed with these excellencies, he declares himself ready to bestow on you all the blessings of his salvation; for these are his own words, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit, and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Come, then, to this divine Redeemer, in faith in his sacrifice, in deep humility, in lively gratitude, and in sincere desires of obedience. Tremble at the thought of the misery of being crushed under his feet for ever as enemies; if you are still carrying visibly in your hands the weapons of rebellion against him, cast them away from you; or, if you have already done so, seek that the last remains of reluctance and resistance within you may utterly cease. Lord, send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies; and make us all willing in the day of thy power!

The other topic in the passage before us is, *the caution against the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees*; for the Pharisees, as well as the scribes, are mentioned in the parallel passage of Matthew.\* While Jesus, still teaching in the temple, was speaking in this way of the Messiah, as David's Lord and David's son, "the common] people," as Mark† mentions, "heard him gladly;" they were charmed, for the time, with the manner of his teaching, though few of them appear to have been permanently impressed. "Then," as Luke states, "*in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples*" (addressing himself more immediately to his disciples, though for the benefit of all within hearing), "*Beware of the scribes.*" As we have had repeated opportunities of speaking of the scribes and Pharisees, and as we noticed, particularly, various illustrations of the pride and hypocrisy by which they were generally characterized, when we were considering part of the 11th chapter of this Gospel,‡ we shall be very brief here.

In this place, our Lord speaks of them as "*desiring to walk in long robes*"—in very long gowns, reaching down to

\* Matt. xxiii. 1-14.

† Mark xii. 37.

‡ See Lecture lxi.

their feet, and not tucked up, thus affecting great pomp. Our Lord is here to be considered as condemning extravagance and pride in dress, and not what is suitable in itself, and becoming men's station. Christ also describes them as loving "*greetings in the markets*," or the being saluted with pompous titles in places of public resort. "They love to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi," said he, according to Matthew;\* "but be ye not called, Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ." The scribes and Pharisees also loved "*the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms*," or places, "*at feasts*;"† the reason of which, in proud, overbearing men, is abundantly plain. "*Who devour widows' houses*," added our Lord. They ingratiated themselves with widows, and other defenceless persons, under pretence of great benevolence; and then, when they got the property of such in their power, they cruelly oppressed and spoiled them. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees," saith the Lord, "and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless." Such conduct is very bad in any, but especially infamous when following on professions of kindness, and perpetrated by those who desire to be reputed religious. "*And for a show make long prayers*." We cannot suppose that the practice of praying fully, and somewhat long, especially on some particular occasions, is here condemned; for that would be to condemn Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and our Lord's intercessory prayer, both of which are, comparatively, long; and that would be especially inconsistent with what we read of Christ, when it is said,‡ that he "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Various circumstances, no doubt, should determine the length of time which should be spent in this exercise; and, while sufficient time should be allowed to engage the mind, and pour out the heart, unreasonable and wearisome prolixity should be avoided. As our Lord's words here shortly indicate, so we learn, more particularly, from other sources, that the scribes and Pharisees were often most unreasonably and ostentatiously long in their prayers. They spent an hour in meditating before their prayers, an hour in the rehearsal of them, and another hour in meditation after

\* Matt. xxiii. 7. † See Lecture on Luke xiv. 7. ‡ Luke vi. 12.

them; and this they sometimes did thrice a-day, thus spending nine hours a-day altogether.\* Besides, it appears that they had no variety of suitable and full prayer, but repeated the same short prayers again and again. "Use not vain repetitions," said our Lord, "as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." But, whether prayers be long or short, few or many, they are always sinful when they are made for a show, or pretence, and in order to impose on men the idea of piety. They are always sinful when they are gone about with any selfish or sinister design. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight."

For such wickedness as this our Lord, as we read in Matthew, denounced his displeasure, saying repeatedly, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" And he added, as in the close of the passage before us, "*The same shall receive greater damnation.*" As there are different degrees of progress in holiness, and different degrees of reward, so there are different degrees of guilt, and different degrees of punishment. "He that knew his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."—"Therefore, he that delivered me unto you hath the greater sin," said Christ; and, "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment," than for those who resist gospel light. Surely, such pride and hypocrisy as were here rebuked, deserved, and, without repentance, would actually incur, a very weighty condemnation. Our Lord called on his hearers to beware of these persons—to beware of being circumvented and injured by them, and to beware of resembling them.

So, let us beware of all such characters, lest they injure us in our temporal or spiritual concerns. A bad example, on the part of teachers, is peculiarly wicked and dangerous; and it is a great infelicity when people need to be on their guard against those who should be their guides and patterns in the way of duty. At the same time, it is to be remembered, that similar conduct is also very criminal in others, and that no hypocrisy, or inconsistency of any kind, in any description of men, can ever justify the neglect of religion in us. Whatever be the spirit or conduct of others, then, let us seek after true faith and holiness. Let us be clothed with humility; for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to

\* See Lightfoot on Matt. xxii. 14.

the humble." Let us seek to do all the good we can from motives of disinterested benevolence. Let us, in particular, instead of oppressing, succour the defenceless. Let us seek to deliver the poor that cries, and the fatherless, and him that has none to help; let the blessing of him that is ready to perish come upon us; and let us cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. Let us practise "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, which is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." And, finally, as God desires "truth in the inward parts," let us pray that he would create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us; let us, in all things, study "simplicity and godly sincerity;" and let us, especially, be true and unaffected in our devotions, for the Lord will "give ear unto the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips."

## LECTURE CIX.

## LUKE XXI. 1-4.

“ And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God : but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.”

**HUMAN** nature may, not unjustly, be considered as a compound of selfishness and of benevolence, of cruelty and of kindness, of impiety and of devotion. When we think, not merely of the more atrocious deeds of the murderer, the robber, the persecutor, but of the sad prevalence of that hardness of heart which remains untouched by the misery by which it is surrounded ; when we think of the prevalence of griping worldliness, and envy, and jealousy, and scandal, and scorning ; especially, when we think of the awful extent to which these evils prevail where they are not met by the counteracting influence of revelation, we must acknowledge that the apostle draws, though a dark, not an overcharged picture of men in their natural state, when he represents them, “ as foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” On the other hand, fallen humanity is still humanity. Who can deny (or rather, why should any one wish to deny so pleasant a fact) that, generally speaking, there are in our nature an aptitude to feel at the sight of human misery, which produces a desire to relieve it, and a tendency to some kind of religion, which often prompts to great sacrifices ? The very word humanity is a proof that the aptitude to feel is characteristic of the human kind. It may be questioned whether there ever existed a man who was so much a monster as never to have done a generous action ; but there can be no question that there are many who are ready kindly to interfere when the cry of misery assails their ear, or the sight of poverty meets their eye, and who habitually take pleasure in diffusing temporal

happiness around them. And yet, it is quite possible that such kindness may be exercised without any regard to God, and, therefore, have no connection whatever with religion. In fact, this benevolence may be sometimes only entitled to rank with our instincts; and it has undoubtedly remained with us in our fallen condition, as being necessary to the very existence of our species. Nor ought we to withhold from this feeling any praise which is due to it: in reference to men it is commendable and amiable. Somewhat of the beautiful, in human estimation, has remained to our nature, long after all that was spiritually and religiously good has been lost; and, what is thus beautiful, we ought to behold with a corresponding pleasure. It is thus that we are pleased to contemplate the smile that rests on the countenance of the dead body, after the spirit has fled by which it was animated; and it is thus that we admire the elegance of the ruined temple, when ages have elapsed since it echoed the praises of him to whom it was dedicated. Now, the gospel is intended, not to destroy, but to improve, whatever is really amiable in men's dispositions. It avails itself of this natural benevolence, and superinduces on it far higher sentiments. It converts the impulse into a rational principle. It often awakens feeling where it is dormant; but it establishes the exercise of benevolence on a firmer ground than that of uncertain and temporary feeling. It fixes it on the reasonable basis of duty; it connects it with a supreme regard to God; it secures for it the divine acceptance, through the Redeemer; and it stimulates to its more zealous and more abundant discharge, by every motive which can have weight with a renewed and grateful heart, and by every argument which can bear on enlightened views of the glory of God, and the temporal and eternal welfare of ourselves and others.

The passage at present before us contains much instruction in relation to the liberality with which we should contribute, both to the relief of the poor and to the support of religion. "*And he,*" that is, Jesus, "*looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.*" We find a parallel to this part of the history in the 12th chapter of Mark, from the 41st verse: there it is said, "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much." Having this day enlarged very much in his teaching in the temple, our Lord, before leaving it, sat down



opposite to that part of it which was called the treasury. The treasury was in that court of the temple which was called by Jewish writers the court of the women, a name given to that court because women were not allowed to proceed farther, except when they brought a sacrifice, and then they went forward into what was called the court of Israel. The court of the women was, in fact, the place where the Jewish men, as well as women worshipped, who came to pray at other hours besides those of the morning and evening prayers, or who, at those hours, brought no sacrifice with them. This court, as the word commonly implies, was open at the top, that is, without a roof; but it was surrounded with cloisters, or piazzas, above which were many chambers for various purposes. In this court, as already remarked, was the treasury, including every convenience for collecting and depositing in safety the money which was offered by the worshippers, namely, chests placed in the open court for receiving the money at first, and some of the chambers just mentioned, for emptying the contents of the chests into afterwards. These chests and chambers together had the general name of the treasury; as also had the place where they were situated. Thus, we read in John viii. 20, "These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple." We have one example of the use of a chest in the way here referred to, in 2 Kings xii. 9, and 2 Chron. xxiv. 8: "Jehoiada, the priest, took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar" (and afterwards, without at the gate of the house of the Lord), "on the right side, as one cometh into the house of the Lord."—"And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the Lord the collection that Moses, the servant of God, laid upon Israel in the wilderness. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought it, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. Now it came to pass, that, at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe, and the high-priest's officer, came and emptied the chest, and took it and carried it to its place again. Thus they did, day by day, and gathered money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the Lord." This method of collecting money in the temple was continued, and carried to a greater extent. During the last ages in

which the second temple stood, there were, according to the best accounts,\* no fewer than thirteen chests, or receptacles,† set out, with different inscriptions on them, intimating the purposes to which what might be put into them was to be applied. Of these chests, two were for the half-shekel poll tax, which was not optional, but expressly fixed by the law.‡ The collectors “demanded this tax calmly” at first, that is, at the time when it was strictly due, “and used no roughness or compulsion. Ten days after they forced men to pay.”§ The other chests were, some of them, for what was contributed according to other fixed rules, and some for what was voluntary, and of the nature of a free-will offering; for example, for purchasing animals for sacrifices, for wood or frankincense, and for the surplus of different offerings. “Besides the chambers where tithes, first-fruits, vessels, and vestments, were treasured up, as they were in the chambers by the gates, and by the sides of the temple, there were three chamber treasuries of remarkable note,” one for the half-shekel, one for what was given for the repair and service of the temple, and one for what was offered for charitable uses.

As Jesus was sitting opposite to the treasury, he looked up and saw people of different classes casting in their gifts into some of the chests; “and many that were rich cast in much.” It was right and satisfactory, in so far, at least, that these rich persons gave largely. It would be useful in its results, whatever the disposition of the offerers might be; and in those of them who offered from right motives, it would be acceptable to God.

“*And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.*” The mite was of brass, and the smallest coin used by the Jews; and, according to the parallel passage in Mark, two mites|| made a farthing, which was the smallest Roman coin. “*And he said, Of a truth,*” or verily (wishing the certainty and importance of what he said to be well observed), “*I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all;*” not more in itself, for it was a

\* Josephus, Lightfoot's Prospect of the Temple, from Maimonides, &c.

† שִׁפְפוֹת, trumpets, so called from their being narrow at the top, and wide at the bottom. Vide Relandi Antiq. part i., sect. 12; and De Spoliis Templi, cap. xx., Utrecht edition, 1716, with the Engraving.

‡ Exod. xxx. 11; see Lect. on xx. 22.

§ Lightfoot's Prospect of the Temple.

|| אֲרַבָּא, corresponding to פְּרֻטָּה.

very small sum, but more for her, more in proportion to her means, and, therefore, more in point of true liberality and in God's estimation. "*For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*" However large in themselves, and however commendable in every respect, the contributions of a rich or prosperous man to pious and charitable purposes may be, it must be confessed, that, as they are given out of what is superfluous to him, and still leave plenty behind, they manifest less faith and less benevolence than those which, though they may be much smaller in themselves, are given out of very scanty means, and, especially, than those which leave to the donor nothing over for the supply of his own wants. Now, the case here mentioned was remarkable in several respects. The donor was a widow, and therefore helpless and unsupported; she was a poor widow, nay, a very poor widow indeed, since so small a sum was all she possessed; yet she contributed to the offerings of God, nay, she contributed all that she had, for she had but two mites, and she gave them both. She cast in, not of her abundance, but "of her penury." She cast in "all the living that she had"—all that she had to subsist on at the time—trusting to the blessing of God on her endeavours after the necessities of life for the time to come. Thus, under the impulse of true piety and benevolence, she manifested great faith and great disinterestedness. This our Lord saw and knew perfectly, marking, it is to be supposed, the rectitude of the motives which influenced her, as well as the generosity of the deed; and, "calling unto him his disciples,"\* that they might carefully observe her excellent conduct, and his high commendation of it.

The passage not standing in need of any farther explanation, we shall proceed to found on it some generally applicable remarks of a practical nature.

1. *It is necessary and scriptural that there be public voluntary contributions for pious and charitable purposes.* Whatever provision may be made for these purposes by authoritative national enactment, according to the example of the divinely appointed government of Israel, or by the splendid bequests of persons who have left the world, there will still, according also to the same example, be need for voluntary exertion to supply what will be lacking. There will be need, both for private charity to meet some indi-

\* Mark xii. 43.

vidual cases which would otherwise be overlooked, and for the combined exertion of multitudes to accomplish more costly and more extensive benefits. Whatever is wanting for the more complete diffusion of religious instruction in our own land, and for the extension of the gospel to the whole world, ought to be furnished to the utmost of our power. We are sure, too, that there will ever be need for contributing to relieve the temporal wants of men. From the times being more or less favourable, and the seasons more or less plentiful or healthful, and the means for the alleviation or prevention of pauperism more or less judicious or energetic, the cases of distress will, no doubt, be more or less numerous and urgent at different periods; but we have the authority both of the Giver of the law and of the Author of the gospel, for affirming that there will ever be need for alms-giving. "The poor shall never cease out of the land," said Moses: "The poor ye have always with you," said Jesus Christ. Hence the necessity for the actual imparting of pecuniary aid—its necessity, both for the relief of the destitute, and for proof of the sincerity of professors of religion. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The particular way in which the greater part of the money voluntarily contributed for pious and charitable purposes in this country is raised, namely, by collections at our congregational meetings for public worship and the preaching of the gospel, recommends itself as very similar to that of the chests of the treasury in the temple of Jerusalem. It is, also, agreeable to the spirit of the apostle's direction to the Corinthians:\* "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." It is surely a beautiful coincidence, that the piety and liberality of Christians thus meet together, so that it may be hoped that in many cases, through the incense of the Saviour's merits, their "prayers and their alms," like those of Cornelius, "come up for a memorial before God."

2. *Both the rich and the poor should contribute to pious and charitable purposes, and that according to their respective ability.* Among the rich must here be ranked, not only

\* 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

those who are in great affluence, but also those who are in easy and prosperous circumstances. None suppose that the rich are to be exempted from this duty; nay, every one is rather disposed to look to them chiefly. Those who, being rich for their station, can steel their hearts and shut their hands against such claims, thereby give evident proof of an entire want of Christian principle, and expose themselves to aggravated condemnation. To such the apostle James says: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." The rich, however, should not only give, but give according to their ability; and if they do this, they will give much. Suffer me to press this consideration on the consciences of those who are in prosperous circumstances. This rule of proportion in charity is the rule of reason and common sense. It is not enough that a wealthy man give something; he may give so little, in comparison with what God gives him, that it would be absurd to call him a charitable man. What may be enough, nay, very generous, in others, may be insignificant, sordid, and shameful in him. This rule of proportion in giving is also the rule of Scripture. It was binding under the Old Testament dispensation. "Three times in a year," said the inspired lawgiver to Israel, "shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord shall choose;" "and they shall not appear before the Lord empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee."\* The same is binding under the New Testament dispensation. According to the words of Paul to the Corinthians, already quoted in part, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." In the time of the great dearth, "the disciples at Antioch, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren who dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."†

With regard to the poorer classes, the general principle that every one ought to give as God has prospered him, and the approved example of this poor widow, show that they are by no means to be exempted from this duty. If,

\* Deut. xvi. 16.

† Acts xi. 29.

indeed, there be absolute inability, the duty ceases, of course, as to outward action, yet not as to the desire of the heart to do good. But, where there is any ability at all, there ought to be a performance according to that ability. Let none blame applications to those in the humbler walks of life, for some aid in such cases, as if it were a hardship imposed on them; for, have they not feelings of kindliness, and, if they have been touched by the grace of God, have they not a desire to advance his glory, as well as their superiors in station? And would they not consider an exemption here as no privilege, but as a disparagement, a disadvantage, and a loss? None in humble life, who have anything at all to spare, should refuse or neglect to contribute to the offerings of God, for that would be very ungrateful and unbecoming. Nor let any of them excuse themselves on the plea that the small sum they could give would be of no use; for every sum is of use, according to its value, and what those in the lower ranks of life want of power as to property and income individually, they have by their numbers; so that, probably, as much may be done, nay, is actually done, in some places by them, as by the few who may be called rich. Let such, then, be admonished, according to Paul's precept, to "labour, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth." It was a fine example which was set by that apostle himself, when he was able to say to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Christians, if they find it necessary, should exert themselves to the utmost, and curtail their own expenses as far as possible, rather than be deprived of this great and most desirable privilege, "the luxury of doing good." We have another fine example in the history of Elijah. To whom did the Lord send the prophet in his straits?—to any of the rich or the noble of the earth? No. "Arise," said he, and "get thee to Zarephath, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose, and went." And the widow cheerfully fulfilled the trust wherewith she was honoured, by baking for him a cake of her last handful of meal.

The Lord is doubtless well pleased with the truly pious

and truly benevolent contributions of all classes of men; but the way in which he spoke of this widow's two mites, proves that such contributions from the poor are peculiarly well-pleasing in his sight. He estimates them by an unusual standard, not the standard of their own absolute value, but the standard of the ability of the donor, and inversely as that ability; that is, the less the ability the greater the worth of the gift. In all cases, indeed, the purity of benevolent intention, and their acting up to their ability, are the points to which he chiefly looks. The ointment which the woman poured on Jesus head was very precious, but the commendation he bestowed on her was this, "She hath done what she could."\* In like manner, all will be accepted of him who, in the same spirit, do what they can for his people and his cause. Most instructive to all classes, but especially to the lower, are the words of the apostle to the Corinthians:† "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For, to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. Therefore, as ye abound in everything," "see that ye abound in this grace also."—"Now, therefore, perform the doing of it, that, as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."‡

3. *It concerns us all to see that our contributions be such, in respect of the principles and motives from which they flow, as will meet with the divine approbation.* Every view

\* Mark xiv. 8.

† 2 Cor. viii. 1.

‡ Even heathens could see the reasonableness of this principle:—

Ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas:

Hæc ego contentos auguror esse deos.

Hæc facit, ut veniat pauper quoque gratus ad aras,

Et placeat cæso non minus agna bove.

*Ovid. El.*

Xenophon, in his *Memorabilia*, states this as having been the opinion of Socrates. *Θυσίας δὲ θύων μικρὰς ἀπο μικρῶν, οὐδὲν ἄγιστόν μιν οὐσθαι τῶν ἀπο πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα θύοντων*—'Ἐπαινεῖται δ' ἢ καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν τούτων,

*Καὶ δυνάμει δ' ἰσθύνει ἢ ἀθροισμῶσι θύουσιν.*

of the duty of making pious and charitable offerings in which this point is kept out of sight, must be essentially defective. We are assured \* that it is possible for a man to "bestow all his goods to feed the poor," and yet to have no true charity: in like manner, it is possible to give large sums for religious purposes, without any true religion. The rich, and also the poor, may give away money from thoughtlessness, or mere natural sympathy, or ostentation, without regard to God's will and glory, without any reference to the Mediator, and without the sanctified emotions of a new heart. Such gifts may be useful in their effects, but they cannot be accepted of God. How, then, shall we be capable of giving of our substance properly and acceptably? By being ourselves first "accepted in the Beloved," and possessed of a renewed mind; and then, by guarding against every unhallowed and sinister motive, while we make conscience of actually giving as God has prospered us. Let us attend to this personally and seriously, so shall we attain to "the end of the commandment, which is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," and our contributions will be "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

Finally, Keeping these principles in view, *be exhorted to cast liberally into the offerings of God, by the encouraging considerations which are placed before you in his Word.* Remember, as this passage implies, that when you are casting into the treasury, *the eye of the Lord Jesus Christ is upon you.* You may escape the notice of men, but you cannot escape his notice. He looked up, and beheld both the rich people and the poor widow. The upward glance and the steady look of his eye on that occasion made it plain that he saw them; but he ever sees all. "Whence knowest thou me?" asked Nathanael; and Jesus answered, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." He sees both the disposition which prompts you to charity, and the extent to which you carry it. He expects that the motive should be right, but he expects that the sum should be right also.

Remember, again, the considerations connected with *the amazing kindness of your God and Saviour to you.* How many and how great are the providential favours for which you are indebted to the Lord! He never leaves himself without a witness, in that he "does you good, and fills

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.



your hearts with food and gladness." If, then, he "gives you richly all things to enjoy," see "that you do good, that you be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." And, when you think of the matchless kindness manifested to you in providing for the salvation of your souls, and for the relief of all your spiritual poverty and wretchedness, how ought this to open your hearts and hands to do all you can to supply both the temporal and spiritual wants of others! This is the great argument by which the apostle urges the Corinthian converts to abound in the grace of alms-giving: "For," says he, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."\*

Be exhorted, once more, to give liberally, by the consideration of *the promise of an abundant recompense*. It is very certain that you cannot render God your debtor by anything you can give; for, give what you may, you are only giving him what is his own. But he is pleased with every act of obedience, and will graciously reward what is the result of his own grace. He promises a reward in this world, and a reward in the next. The cheerful furnishing of what is necessary for the cause of religion has an express temporal promise annexed to it: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Charity to the poor has also a special temporal promise annexed: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." So says the Psalmist, and that without indulging a spirit of self-righteousness; for he immediately adds: "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee."† "God is not unrighteous," saith Paul, "to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Thus, true Christian liberality shall not only be repaid, but more than repaid

Cor. viii. 9.

† Ps. xli. 1-4.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." If you give as unto "the offerings of the Lord," you shall be recompensed at least "at the resurrection of the just." To those who are benevolent from love to Christ he will say, from his judgment-seat, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," "for, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The smallest act of this kind shall be acknowledged; even a "cup of cold water," given to one of Christ's people in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward. But remember, that here, as in every other particular, the gracious reward rises in proportion to the degree of the grace to which it corresponds. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."—"He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

This encouragement, then, addresses itself to enlightened views of prudence and self-interest. It is such an encouragement as, had it not been distinctly expressed in Scripture, we should have been afraid, and have deemed it presumptuous, to propose. But you are assured that the way of pious and charitable contribution is the safest and most profitable investment for your property, and, wonderful to tell! in this way the great God himself appears here in the character of a borrower. Jehovah may be considered as desirous not to take from you altogether, but to borrow of you, as much as will suffice to carry on his benevolent purposes. The thing is no doubt astonishing, but it is not more astonishing than true. When he calls for your charitable contributions, the question he puts to you is not exactly, How much will you give? but rather, How much will you lend? And, if you ask, What security is there for the repayment? we reply, There is the promise, there is the oath, nay, there is the bond, of the God of heaven and of earth. His holy Word contains his own written engagement; so that, when you wish to examine your security, you have only to take your Bible, and to turn to the 19th chapter and the 17th verse of the Book of Proverbs, where you will find your security drawn out in these words: "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

## LECTURE CX.

## LUKE XXI. 5-11.

"And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6. As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? 8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. 10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: 11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."

IN the last lecture we considered, and improved, the circumstance of the poor widow casting in her two mites, which were her all, into the treasury. Our Lord had now visited the temple for the last time. Having, on several successive days, there warned the congregated people, without making any general impression on them, he left the devoted place, denouncing, as appears from Matthew,\* many a heavy woe on the impenitent and unbelieving nation, and pouring out his farewell in these pathetic words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

"And," says Luke, "*as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts.*" The passages parallel to that now before us are in the 24th chapter of Matthew and the 13th chapter of Mark. In Matthew, we read, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple;

Matt. xxiii.

and his disciples came to him, to show him the buildings of the temple;" and in Mark, "As he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" This related to the temple as it then existed, and as repaired, or rather rebuilt, by Herod the Great, when it was much more splendid than it was when built after the return from the Babylonish captivity. The chief source of information on the whole of this subject, as is well known, is the Jewish historian Josephus. As he knew the city and temple of Jerusalem in their splendour, and was present at their siege and destruction, his testimony must be considered competent and credible; and, as he was not a Christian, his testimony cannot be considered as the result of any unfair partiality for Christianity, and, therefore, the confirmation it affords of the accuracy of the descriptions and of the fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the New Testament, is doubly strong. The following extracts from his "Jewish Antiquities and Wars," though, from their necessary brevity, incomplete and unconnected, will give some idea of the beauty and grandeur of this temple:—

"And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was."—"Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong" (of the finest marble), "and the length of each of them was twenty-five cubits," or thirty-seven and a half feet, "their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve." This seems to have been their ordinary size, for there were some of them much larger. The doors and lintels "were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple and pillars interwoven; and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which were a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done. He also encompassed the entire temple with very large cloisters, contriving them to be in due proportion thereto; and he laid out larger sums of money upon them than had been done before him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he had done." Of certain gates, the historian says,

"Now nine of these gates were on every side covered over with gold and silver, as were the jambs of their doors and their lintels; but there was one gate that was without (the inward court of) the holy house, which was of Corinthian brass, and greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold."—"As to the holy house itself, which was placed in the midst (of the inmost court), that was the most sacred part of the temple; it was ascended to by twelve steps; and, in front, its height and its breadth were equal, and each a hundred cubits," or a hundred and fifty feet. "Its first gate was seventy cubits high, and twenty-five wide; but this gate had no doors."—"Its front was covered with gold all-over, and through it the first part of the house that was more inward did all of it appear, which, as it was very large, so did all the parts about the more inward gate appear to shine to those that saw them; but then, as the entire house was divided into two parts within, it was only the first part of it that was open to our view." This gate "had also golden vines about it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height."—"Now, the outward face of the temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendour, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. But this temple appeared, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for, as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white."—"Of its stones, some were forty-five cubits" (or sixty-seven and a half feet) in length." The following saying is quoted from a rabbinical writer, "He that never saw the temple of Herod, never saw a fine building."\* Well might the disciples exclaim, "See what manner of stones, and what buildings, are here!"

The disciples spoke of the temple as being also adorned with "gifts."† The custom of depositing and hanging up

\* *Horsæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ in Matt. xxiv. l.*

† *Ἀνθήματα προσεμνηται.* Josephus, *Antiq. xii. 2*, and *xv. 11*; Tacitus *Hist. v. 8*; *1 Chron. xxvi. 20*. Xenophon (*De Exped. lib. v.*) says that he solemnly deposited, in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, a gift (*ἄνθημα*) on which he had written his own name, and the name of Proxenus. Herodotus (*lib. i.*) says that the temple of Belus, or Bel, at Babylon, was adorned with many gifts: *Το μὲν δὲ ἱερὸν τοῦτο οὕτω προσεμνηται.*

on the walls and pillars, consecrated, votive gifts, was common in most ancient temples. Thus, many persons had signified their gratitude for favours received, or followed out their vows, or manifested their general devotion, by splendid and costly presents, to remain for the ornament of the temple at Jerusalem. For example, at an earlier period, Ptolemy Philadelphus presented a most costly and beautiful golden table, two cisterns of gold, and thirty vials of gold, all studded with precious stones. Whatever spoils were carried away from the temple, it was still possessed of great riches. Tacitus calls it a temple "of immense wealth." Speaking of the cloister that "looked to the gates of the temple," Josephus says, "It had been adorned by many kings in former times, and round about the entire temple were fixed the spoils taken from barbarous nations; all these had been dedicated to the temple by Herod, with the addition of those he had taken from the Arabians." As early as the time of David, there is mention of "the treasures of the dedicated things," which had been consecrated to lie as monuments of devotion, as distinguished from "the treasures of the house of God," or the money and various articles intended for ordinary use. Of the great golden vine already noticed as in Herod's temple, it is said that, like a true natural vine, it grew greater and greater; for "men would be offering, some gold to make a leaf—some a grape—some a bunch; and these were hung up upon it, and so it was increasing continually." Over the temple door, also, there was suspended a golden candlestick, which was presented by Helena, queen of Adiabene, when she went up to worship Jehovah there.\*

It is right, where the wealth in other respects is great, that no reasonable expense should be spared on what pertains to the service of God. But it is possible to be splendid in external and artificial things, while what is essential to the sincerity and purity of public worship is neglected. How unimportant is it to be able to speak only of the walls

\* *Ἐστὶ δὲ καὶ ἰδία ἀνάθηματα πολλὰ.* He also (lib. vii.) speaks of the temple of Apollo as very rich, and furnished out with many votive gifts: *Ἐνθα ἦν ἱερὸν Ἀπολλωνος πλουσιον, θησαυροῖσι τε καὶ ἀνάθημασι πολλοῖσι κατισπινασμινον.* It appears from Polybius (iv. 62) that such gifts were partly for the ornament of the temples, and partly for the use of those who assembled at the festivals: *Ὅσα πρὸς κόσμον, ἢ χερσὶν ὑπαρχὴ τοῖς εἰς τὰς πανηγυρεῖς συμπροσυνεμένοις.* See also Virg. *Æn.* xii. 768; Hor. *Od.* i. 5; Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*, iii. 37.

\* Prospect of the Temple, chap. xiii. sect. 4.

and ornaments and revenues of a church in which there is but little knowledge, faith, love, and holiness! Whatever may be her outward decorations, or her outward plainness, the most important point to know is, if she have this mark of the King's daughter that she is "all glorious within."\* No wonder that the disciples, as Jews, admired their temple; they may have felt, however, an undue elation: at least, it is certain that many Jews indulged something of an improper spirit of national pride, when they beheld it and spoke of it, and were ready to exclaim, in false confidence, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

"As for these things which ye behold," said our Lord, "the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The way in which Jesus spoke of the things which the disciples so highly admired, and which, according to men's ordinary rules of judging, were very admirable, "emphatically showed his holy indifference to all external magnificence." "The spiritual mind, perceiving the time when the fashion of this world shall pass away, will not be satisfied except with a city, and a temple, the foundations of which cannot be subverted, and the ornaments of which cannot be defaced."† History shows, in a very affecting and humbling manner, how many a city that said, in the pride of her prosperity, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow," has been "swept with the besom of destruction." Direful indeed is the exemplification of this in the ruin of Jerusalem and her temple. The view, however, of the accomplishment of what is foretold in this verse, will come in most naturally after that of the taking of the city.

Verse 7: "*And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?*" On comparing Matthew and Mark, we find that our Lord, having left the temple and the city, was now sitting over against them, on the Mount of Olives, where he would have a very commanding view of them; and that the disciples, particularly, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who seem to have been honoured with a more than ordinary share of his confidence and favour, asked him these questions privately. What they asked is most fully given by Matthew, and in that Gospel runs thus:—"Tell us, when shall these things be? and

\* Ps. xlv. 13.

† Scott.

what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Now, the whole of what Christ says in the remaining part of the chapter is, clearly, a reply to these questions, and, therefore, must, in a good measure, be interpreted according to their import. And here, it is not to be disguised that considerable difficulty exists in giving a definite and consistent interpretation of this chapter throughout. Some expositors confine its application to the destruction of Jerusalem, and do not admit that any part of it has any reference to the day of judgment. I cannot think that that scheme gives the full meaning of the passage. Others, and probably the majority, though with some shades of variety, agree in holding, I think correctly, that the second coming of Christ, in the commonly received sense, at the day of judgment, is also spoken of in this chapter. Of these, there are some who think that the place where the one subject is dropped, and the other taken up, is manifest; while there are others who do not see that the transition can be so accurately fixed. Were we sure of the exact meaning which the disciples attached to their own questions, and also, of how far our Lord intended what he said to be a direct reply to these questions, according to that very meaning, and nothing more, little room for difference of opinion as to the import of what he said would remain. With the exception, however, of the circumstance that from what our Lord had just been saying, the disciples must have intended to ask him concerning the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple, nothing farther as to their intentions, in questioning him, seems so clear as to be beyond dispute. At the same time, it is probable that they did not understand, and, therefore, could not distinctly refer to, the fact that the Jewish dispensation was to give place to the Christian; that now, as on other occasions, they had an eye to their groundless expectation of Christ's establishing a temporal kingdom on earth; and also, that if (as is probable enough) they referred to his proper second coming at the end of the world, in the usual sense, they considered that event as very near at hand. It is true that the words, in Matthew, rendered, "The end of the world,"\* might be rendered, "The end of the age," so as to determine the question to relate to the end of that particular age, or the Jewish dispensation. But the rendering in our version is much more obvious and natural, and

\* *Της συνταλίας του αἰῶνος*. See, in the original, Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49, and xxviii. 20.



also more agreeable to the way in which the very same original words are translated, with evident propriety, in other places. For example, "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world." In the interpretation of the parable of the net, it is said, "So shall it be at the end of the world." And Christ follows up the command to teach and baptize, with the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Besides, much of what is contained in this passage, especially towards the end, admits of a very natural application to what is commonly called the end of the world, and can scarcely be read without suggesting that idea. Upon the whole, it seems to me the most correct method of interpretation to expound the greater part of this chapter, primarily and directly, of Christ's providential coming at the destruction of Jerusalem; not forgetting, however, that we have therein an emblem of his personal coming at the judgment of the great day, and that the description of this latter event is interwoven, or, at least, intimately and inseparably connected with that of the former, some of the verses being applicable only to the former event, but many of them being equally applicable to both; while the latter event is more and more clearly pointed to, as we get on towards the close of the passage. This idea is strengthened by the consideration that our Lord, as appears from the 25th chapter of Matthew, there speaks, almost exclusively, of the latter subject, in the parables of the ten virgins, and the talents, and in the long and very striking description of the transactions of the judgment-day. According to this view, our Lord replies directly to the inquiries of his disciples respecting the fate of Jerusalem; and, at the same time, without a direct refutation of the errors under which they may have laboured with regard to the nature of his kingdom, or the circumstances of his second coming, leads forward their thoughts to the last judgment, to which much of what he said, with a more immediate reference to Jerusalem's fall, might well be applied, and for which it concerned them above all things to be in a state of preparation.\* Scripture contains various

\* This view of the passage was clearly entertained and expressed by Tertullian (*De Resurrectione*, xxii.) "*Interrogatus a discipulis, quando eventura essent quæ interim de templi exitu eruperant, ordinem temporum, primo Judaicorum usque ad excidium Hierusalem; dehinc communium, usque ad conclusionem seculi, dirigit.*"—"Being asked by his disciples, when the events would take place which had just broken from

examples of this kind—that is, examples of two subjects, a primary and a secondary—interwoven, or, the one passing by an almost insensible transition into the other; for instance, the 72d Psalm, in which the two subjects of the kingdom of David, or Solomon, and the kingdom of Christ, are plainly described, while it is difficult to say to which of the subjects some of the verses most exactly refer; and yet, towards the end of the psalm, the glory of the former kingdom is almost lost in the glory of the latter.

The first question which the disciples put to Jesus was, “When shall these things be?” Here they evidently inquired into the *time* when the calamities of which he had been speaking were to happen. Now, he made no definite reply to this question. With regard, indeed, to the overthrow of the city and temple, he afterwards gave a general idea of the time, by intimating that it would take place during the life of some of that generation; but he did not tell them the day, nor even the year. With regard to the time of the general judgment, he afterwards, in words which appear to refer, at least ultimately, if not solely, to that event, speaks very fully and decidedly of its uncertainty, in so far as the knowledge of created beings, and his own commission to reveal the will of God, were concerned. “Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”\*

But, though Christ would not tell his disciples what it would have been hurtful for them to know, and what he had no commission to reveal—the exact time of the overthrow of their nation, or of the day of judgment—he, in compliance with their other request, mentioned a variety of signs, on the appearance of which it might be known that the time was at hand. Let us proceed to consider these signs in order, in doing which the exactness and minuteness of the predictions, and of their fulfilment in the case of Jerusalem, will appear equally remarkable.

The first sign he mentions is that of *various impostors* laying claim to the title of Messiah, or, at least, to a divine commission as prophets. “*And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near*”—the time,

his lips concerning the destruction of the temple, Jesus arranges the order of the times, first, relating to the Jews, even to the overthrow of Jerusalem, and then, relating to all men, even to the end of the world.”

\* Mark xiii. 32.

probably of promised deliverance from the Roman yoke;\* "*go ye not therefore after them;*" "and," it is added in Matthew, "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." Such impostors were Theudas and Judas, mentioned, in reference to an earlier period, in the 5th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as having drawn away many to destruction. Impostors of this description appeared in great numbers after our Lord's ascension, and before the period of the overthrow of the Jews. "It came to pass," says Josephus, "while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas" (not he of the same name mentioned in the Acts), "persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. A troop of horse were sent after them, who slew many of them, and took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and sent it to Jerusalem." The same historian, writing of what happened during the procuratorship of Felix and Festus, says, "The country was again filled with robbers, and impostors, who deluded the multitude. Yet did Felix seize and put to death many of these impostors every day." —"And now these impostors and deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the power of God. And many that were prevailed on by them suffered the punishment of their folly; for Felix brought them back, and then punished them. Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude to go along with him to the Mount of Olives," having "led them round about from the wilderness" to that mountain. "He said farther, that he would show them from thence, how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down." Many of his followers were slain.† This is generally believed to be the person mentioned in Acts xxi. 38: "Art not thou that Egyptian, who before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness

\* It is doubtful, however, whether the words, "The time draweth near," should be considered as a part of the impostor's speech, or as spoken by Christ in his own person, and so intimating that such impostors were soon to appear. See Dr Campbell's note on this passage.

† Antiq. XX. v. 1, and viii. 5, 6; Wars, II. xiii. 4, 5. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. iv. 22.

four thousand men that were murderers?" Among the impostors was one Dositheus, a Samaritan, who declared "that he was the Christ foretold by Moses." There were many false prophets too, who, during the siege, flattered the Jews with the assurance of safety to the very last. Thus strikingly was this sign fulfilled before the nation's fatal day. Our Lord cautions his disciples against such delusions;\* and there is every reason to believe that the Christians were preserved from the snare.

It is proper to observe that impostors and fanatics of this kind have not been confined to that period, but have appeared in subsequent ages of the Church, as it is foretold that they will still appear, especially before the consummation of all things. The apostle John, writing several years after the destruction of Jerusalem, says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." History speaks of no fewer than twenty-four false Messiahs who deluded the Jews, from the time of the Emperor Adrian to the year of our Lord 1682.† With lower pretensions than these, delusive claims to inspiration have been put forward in different ages, very much to the annoyance and disgrace of particular sections of the Christian Church. Who could have believed it possible, if painful observation had not placed it beyond doubt, that pretensions to inspiration so gross, and consequent impositions so successful, could have arisen in our own advanced period of the world? Heavy indeed is the guilt, where there is anything of imposture known to the parties themselves in such claims; nor light is the sin, where, in consequence of indulged extravagance of imagination, or of spiritual pride, persons have fallen into the insidious snare. Pitiable are those cases, where there is either so general a derangement, or so great (though partial) an eclipse of intellect, as to destroy, or lessen, moral responsibility. Most hurtful to the cause of true piety are all such occurrences, whether they are to be ranked with crimes or with irregularities. Surely, the caution in this verse is of universal application, and deserves to be carefully attended to at the present day.‡ Let all who are uninfected take heed that they be not deceived. Let those who feel as if some belief of the reality of these pretensions were beginning to creep on their minds, exert

\* See also Matt. xxiv. 23-25. † Simpson's Key to the Prophecies.

‡ A.D. 1833.

their reason while they are capable of it; let them resist the insinuating adversary; let them start back, and shake themselves loose from the ghostly danger, which threatens, like a finely party-coloured, but cunning and monstrous serpent, to entwine itself inextricably around them, and crush them in its coils.

The second sign which our Lord gives is that of rumours of wars and tumults: "*Ye shall hear of wars and commotions.*" Before the destruction of Jerusalem, great agitation prevailed throughout the Roman empire, and the struggles for the imperial purple were frequent and bloody. "The emperors Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, suffered violent deaths within the short space of eighteen months. The Emperor Caligula commanded the Jews to place his statue in the temple; and in consequence of a positive refusal, he threatened them with an invasion, which was prevented by his death:" "*Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars.*"\* But, says Christ, "When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, *be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by-and-by.*" He intimated that great perturbation would be unworthy of his disciples in any circumstances; and also, that, however alarming these rumours might be, they were not to imagine that the great calamity he foretold was then to happen immediately, but were to consider such events as gradually preparing the way for it. In like manner, however such things are to precede the last day, Christians are not hastily to conclude that the agitations and changes of the nations are immediately to introduce it. And, in all troublous and threatening times, it becomes them, instead of being overwhelmed with terror, cheerfully to confide in their God, who, without hurting them, will bring about his own ends in his own time. The Psalmist says of the righteous man, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

The third sign is thus expressed in the 10th verse: "*Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*" This may be considered as a continuation of the preceding signs, having, however, less of rumour, and more of actual contest, and bringing, in many cases, the contest closer to the Jews themselves. "Greater disturbances than those which happened under

\* Horne's Introduction. See Jos. Antiq. XVIII. viii., and Wars, II. v. Bishop Newton's excellent work on the prophecies will be often made use of in this and the two following Lectures.

Caligula, took place in the latter part of Claudius' reign, and during that of Nero. The rising of *nation* against *nation* portended the dissension, insurrections, and mutual slaughter of the Jews, and those of other nations, who dwelt in the same cities together; as particularly at Cæsarea, where the Jews and Syrians contended about the right of the city, which contention at length proceeded so far, that above twenty thousand Jews were slain, and the city was cleared of the Jewish inhabitants. At this blow, the whole nation of the Jews were exasperated, and dividing themselves into parties, they burnt and plundered the neighbouring cities and villages of the Syrians, and made an immense slaughter of the people. The Syrians, in revenge, destroyed not a less number of the Jews; and every city, as Josephus expresses it, was divided into two armies." Similar bloody contests took place at Scythopolis, Ascalon, Tyre, Ptolemais, Gadara, Alexandria, and Damascus, as might be proved by quotations from Josephus. "The rising of *kingdom* against *kingdom* portended the open wars of different tetrarchies and provinces against each other; as that of the Jews who dwelt in Peræa against the people of Philadelphia, concerning their bounds, while Cuspius Fadus was procurator; and that of the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, for the murder of some Galileans going up to the feast of Jerusalem, while Cumanus was procurator; and that of the whole nation of the Jews against the Romans, and Agrippa and other allies of the Roman empire, which began while Gessius Florus was procurator."\* All which might also be fully shown from the same authors. How signally, then, was this sign fulfilled! And if it was "a vexation only to understand the report," what must it have been to undergo the reality! At the time of Christ's birth there was universal peace throughout the Roman empire (of which Judea was a part), and, in token of that, the temple of Janus, in Rome, was shut. But from the time the Jews rejected and crucified the Saviour, they were given to desolation, and the sword hardly ever departed from their house.

The fourth sign in the order of Luke is, "*And great earthquakes shall be in divers places.*" If understood in figurative, prophetic language, of national commotions, these earthquakes have been already noticed. But the word seems here to be used literally; and many earthquakes, or tremors and convulsions of the earth, took place

\* Horne's Introduction; Newton and Lardner.

during the period referred to. There was one at Crete in the reign of Claudius; and there were others at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, and other places, in all of which Jews lived. Tacitus\* makes mention of an earthquake at Rome during the same reign. He also says that, in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown; and he mentions the destruction, by the same cause, of a great part of the city of Pompeii. Suetonius speaks of another earthquake at Rome, in the reign of Galba. "There happened in Judea," says Josephus, "vehement winds, dreadful thunderings and lightnings, and vast movings of the shaken earth, which, in the judgment of all, portended no small evil." Natural causes were, in all probability, employed to produce these earthquakes; but the special providence of God was concerned in their occurring, and that so frequently, about this time; and here, too, there was at once a fulfilment of a branch of the prophecy, and an appointed sign of the approach of far heavier judgments. Surely, every earthquake should produce in men an humble feeling of their own helplessness and guilt, and a holy reverence for the great Ruler of all. Had not sin corrupted the world, no such appalling disasters would ever have occurred. "The earth shook and trembled: the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because He was wroth."

The fifth sign given is, "There shall be *famines*." In the 11th chapter of the Acts from the 27th verse, we read: "In those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world," or rather, over all the land; "which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar." This famine is mentioned by the Roman writers Suetonius and Tacitus, and by the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius; and Josephus says that the famine was so severe in Jerusalem, that many died for want of food.† There appear to have been two famines in the days of Claudius.‡ These were severe judgments, and were, besides, appointed tokens of other impending calamities.

The sixth sign is, there shall be "*pestilences*." Though

\* Annals, xiv. 27, xv. 2. Seneca, Nat. Quæst. vi. l. Suetonius, Galbæ, 18. Whitby on Matt. xxiv. 7.

† Sueton. in Claudio, 18. Tac. Ann. xii. 43. Euseb. ii. 8. Joseph. Antiq. XX. ii. 2.

‡ Whitby on Matthew.

pestilence sometimes appears as a solitary judgment, it is the usual attendant on famine. The scarcity and bad quality of the provisions generally produce pestilential, epidemical diseases. Besides the presumption that pestilences must have accompanied the famines just mentioned, we have direct evidence of the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy, from the great Jewish historian, who says that when the Zealots were murdering Nigra of Perseæ, he, besides other calamities, imprecated on them "both famine and pestilence;" "all which imprecations God confirmed against these impious men."\* Pestilence is always a heavy infliction, and one in which the hand of the Lord should be especially seen and acknowledged. God grant that when we are at any time thus visited, it may be the forerunner, not of other calamities, but of a general turning to the Lord.

The seventh sign is thus given: "*And fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven.*" The accomplishment of this was very varied and surprising. Josephus proposes, in his preface to the Wars, to give an account of "the signs and wonders," or prodigies, "that went before" the destruction of Jerusalem; and he does so in the 6th book.† With some abridgment, his account is as follows: "Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself" (still hoping for deliverance, when the state of the city was desperate), "while they did not attend, nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation. Thus, there was a star resembling a sword, which hung over the city, and a comet that continued a whole year. Thus also, before the rebellion, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the 8th day of the month Nisan, at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day-time, which light lasted for half an hour. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and was with difficulty shut by twenty men, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, was seen to be opened of its own accord, about the sixth hour of the night; and was with difficulty

\* Wars, IV. vi. 1.

† Wars, vi. 3.



shut again. This also appeared to the people to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open to them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. Besides these, a few days after that feast, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots, and troops of soldiers in their armour, were seen over all the country, running about among the clouds, and besieging cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner court of the temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they heard first a noise of motion, and then a voice as of a multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence.' But what is still more terrible, there was one Jesus, who came from the country, at the feast of tabernacles, four years before the war broke out, and began, on a sudden, to cry aloud, 'A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against all the people.' This was his cry, as he went about day and night, in all the streets of the city. Some of the chief of the people, indignant at his dire cry, seized on him and chastised him; but he still went on as before. Hereupon, our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine inspiration in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator, where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' He every day uttered the same lamentable words, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued it for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the time when he saw his presage fulfilled in earnest in our siege, when it ceased; for as he was going round upon the wall he cried out with his utmost force, 'Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the temple!' and just as he added, at the last, 'Woe, woe to

myself also! there came a stone from one of the engines, and smote him and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presage, he expired." We have a powerful and interesting confirmation of some of these events in what the heathen Latin author, Tacitus,\* thus says, in his account of this period of the Jewish history: "There happened prodigies which that nation, devoted to superstition, and opposed to all religion, reckon it unlawful to expiate either by sacrifices or vows. Armies were seen engaging, and arms glittering in the sky, and the temple shining with the sudden fire of the clouds. The doors of the temple opened suddenly, and a voice greater than human was heard, that the gods were departing, and, at the same time, a great motion of their departing."—"If Christ had not expressly foretold" such things, "many who give little heed to portents, and who know that historians have been too credulous in that point, would have suspected that Josephus exaggerated, and that Tacitus was misinformed; but as the testimony of Josephus and Tacitus confirm the predictions of Christ, so the predictions of Christ confirm the wonders recorded by these historians."† Thus remarkably was the token verified, "Fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven."

But here we must stop. Time does not permit the subjoining of any reflections. This is the less to be regretted, as these reflections, if they would not be quite premature here, will, at least, come in with greater propriety and force, when we have considered all the signs, and the catastrophe which they introduced. May the Lord bless what has been already noticed, to impress us all with godly fear, and with an abiding and influential conviction of the necessity of being interested in the providential protection of the Almighty, and in the saving benefits of the gospel, in order to our national and personal security.

\* Histor. v. 13. "Evenerant prodigia," &c.

† Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 41.

## LECTURE CXI.

## LUKE XXI. 12-19.

But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls."

ON the last occasion, we considered seven of the signs which our Lord foretold would precede and betoken the destruction of Jerusalem; and we now proceed to consider the eighth, which is, the persecution of his followers. This, with certain declarations and exhortations connected with it, occupies the whole of the passage now under review.

*"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake."* Previous to the dreadful overthrow of their nation, and even, as the words, "before all these" things, seem to signify, previous to the fearful prognostics just mentioned, the disciples were to expect the various evils of persecution. To show the fulfilment of this verse, it will be sufficient to advert to the notices of their subsequent history contained in the New Testament, and, especially, in the Acts of the Apostles. For preaching Christ, the apostles were frequently threatened and taken into custody. Some were "delivered up to councils;"\* as Peter and John, and other apostles. Some were "delivered up to the *synagogues*," and that, too, as it is expressed in Mark, "to be beaten:" "Lord," said Paul, "they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue, them that believed on thee."—"Many of the saints did I shut up in prison," "and I punished them oft

\* Mark xiii. 9; Acts iv. 5, v. 27, xxii. 19, xxvi. 10.

in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Nay, Paul himself lived to undergo persecutions similar to those which he had inflicted on others. "I am," said he, "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned." Imprisonment and scourging frequently went together. That some of the disciples were cast into "prisons," we have already seen from the words of Paul just quoted. It is expressly stated\* that Peter and John were so treated; and the same is said of the apostles in general. Both these injuries were inflicted on Paul and Silas at Philippi: "The multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely; who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."† Some were "brought before kings and rulers," as Paul before Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, and both Paul and Peter before Nero. All these things they were to suffer, and did suffer, for Christ's "name's sake;" for their regard to him, and because they would not deny, but stedfastly confessed him. He gave the apostles a very similar warning of what they would have to suffer, when he first sent them out.‡ In what is usually called his farewell discourse, also, he spoke to them in the same strain, giving the reason why he forewarned them: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended."—"These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them:"§ He made them aware of the persecution that was coming on them, in order that, on its actual occurrence, they might not be stumbled and disconcerted, as by an unexpected and intolerable thing, and driven to renounce their profession; but might be prepared to suffer, nay, in the recollection of what he had thus undisguisedly and prophetically spoken, might draw, from the very injustice and cruelty to which they were exposed, an additional confirmation of their faith.

"And it shall turn to you for a testimony." "It," that

\* Acts iv. 3, v. 18, xii. 4.

† Matt. x. 17.

‡ Acts xvi. 22, &c.

§ John xvi. 1.

is, their exposure to such persecutions; especially, their being called to appear before councils and synagogues, and kings and rulers. The meaning seems to be, that this would furnish an opportunity to them of testifying, or publishing, the gospel, to persons to whom they would not otherwise have had access. "And this will afford scope for your testimony."\* It is true that it is said, in the parallel passage of Mark, (xiii. 9), "Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings," according to our version, "for a testimony *against* them;" but the clause† would have been much more correctly rendered, "for a testimony to them." No doubt, the gospel testimony, when rejected, becomes a testimony against men, but such is not the end it is directly intended to serve, nor is it to be published with that view. This verse, however, may also import that the courage, cheerfulness, and constancy, with which the disciples suffered, would be a testimony in their own favour, showing that they believed what they preached, and were supported by the power of God.

"Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth, and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist." This direction and promise are substantially the same with those which we considered in the 12th chapter from the 11th verse: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."‡ As we then explained that passage at considerable length, we may here remark, more briefly, that these two verses were applicable, in their strongest sense, to the days of inspiration, and are still applicable, in a softened sense, to the present moment. They were applicable in their strongest sense to the days of inspiration. Not, indeed, that we are to suppose that even those who were endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were forbidden to exercise prudent thought, and rational consideration; yet, they were not only cautioned against such thought as is meant in the precept, "Take no thought for the morrow,"—that is, against anxious, distressing, unbelieving thought, which would have been sinful, and would have

\* Dr Campbell's translation. See his remarks on Mark xiii. 9.

† *Et interrogatus ab eis.*

‡ See Lecture lxiv. Odyss. iii. 26, 27. Eumenid. 2-73.

impeded them in the discharge of their duty; but they were also forbidden, in the cases mentioned, to spend time in composing a formal defence of themselves, and were encouraged and commanded to trust to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, both as to their matter and manner, in speaking, and to be ready to give way to these suggestions, and to be careful to speak, not from their own invention, but from his dictating. Our Lord promised to give them both "a mouth," or utterance, and "wisdom," or knowledge, to understand what they ought to say; so that their adversaries, however they might contradict, and rage, and endeavour to bear them down, would in no case be able fairly, or even speciously, to answer them,\* and would, at last, in many cases, be silenced, and have nothing whatever to say against them. This is often seen fulfilled in the history of many of the disciples, who, unlearned, lowly, and inexperienced as most of them were, when called before the public authorities, conducted themselves in the most unembarrassed and becoming, and even triumphant, manner. Let one example suffice, that of Stephen, in disputing with his enemies, who "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake," and also, in his noble defence before the Sanhedrim.†

But the caution and encouragement here given are applicable, in a softened sense, in every age of the Church, both to ministers and people. If the apostle Paul said to inspired Timothy, "I put thee in remembrance to stir up the gift that is in thee," "Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all," much more is diligent study necessary in uninspired teachers. At the same time, they should depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead them right in their studies: and when they have done what they can to fit themselves for their work, they should go forward to it with a lowly sense of their own insufficiency, but with courage, and with confidence in their Master's promised aid, and expecting that, both as to strength of matter, and actual effect, he will enable them to speak with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. And so, when private Christians are called on, by the providence of God, to bear testimony for their Master, in their own sphere, they need not be alarmed, but are here encouraged to confess him before men, trusting

\* "Cui nihil contradicere possit, quod veri habeat speciem."—*Grotius*.

† Acts vi. 10, vii.

that he will enable them to speak and act so as to promote his own cause.

Observe, before leaving this part of the passage, the proof it affords of the Godhead of Christ. In reference to the assistance his disciples were to receive, he does not say, God, or, my Father, will give you, but, *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.* Now, how could he have given them a mouth and wisdom at any time, if he had not himself been possessed of divine wisdom and power? and especially, how could he have afforded them such assistance years after he had left the world, if he had been a mere man, nay, if he had not been God equal with the Father?

Our Lord thus proceeds in his description of the persecutions which were to come on his disciples, in the 16th and 17th verses: "*And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men \* for my name's sake.*" In describing the persecutions raised by Nero, Tacitus † says, that "those Christians who confessed were first seized, and then a prodigious multitude on their information." That Christians, when inquisition was making for them, should be betrayed by heathens who made no profession of Christianity, and were not related to them, was abundantly afflictive to them, and sinful in their persecutors; but there frequently happened what was far more distressing and wicked, for, as Jesus had foretold, a house was frequently divided against itself, some of the members receiving, and some rejecting the gospel, so that a man's worst foes were those of his own house: nay, in some cases, even those connexions who professed Christianity, proved unfaithful, and through mere treachery, or base cowardice, and in the sometimes vain hope of escaping themselves, informed on, and delivered up, their believing friends. In this, the members were conformed to their great Head, who, like David, his type, had occasion to say, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who

\* *ἅπο πάντων*, ab omnibus, i.e., a plerisque (that is, by most, or, almost universally) Ita et Græci *πᾶντα πάντα*, et Latini *pleraque omnia* dicunt. Herodotus, lib. ii. *Αἰγυπτίοι τα πᾶντα πάντα ἱμπαλιν τοῖσι ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις ἰσθσαντο ἥδια τι καὶ νομούς.* Raphelius.—In Scripture, the indefinite word "all" often requires to be understood with some explanation and limitation, and as signifying some, or many, of all nations and of all descriptions. Matt. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 21; Tit. ii. 11. The words in Matt. xxiv. 9, are, "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

† Annal. xv. 44

did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Many were so offended, and stumbled, by the dangers and terrors that beset them, as to renounce a profession which threatened to prove fatal to them; and to such a pitch of wickedness did unbelief and hatred of the truth lead some, that, violating all the bonds of humanity and of natural affection, they had no compassion on their nearest relations, but delivered them up to fining, imprisonment, scourging, and death.

We have two particular examples of persecution unto death for Christ's sake, in the Acts of the Apostles.\* The Jews stoned to death Stephen, who is commonly called the first Christian martyr; and "Herod, the king, having stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church, killed James, the brother of John, with the sword." Early ecclesiastical history gives a minute account of the martyrdom of most of the apostles, many of the circumstances of which are, no doubt, correct; and it is generally thought that they all died as martyrs, except John. From the same source it appears that a great number of Christians were put to death by the unbelieving Jews. But the number of those who were tortured and killed, in various ways, by the Pagans, was immense, and now demands particular attention. Not to insist on occasional, and even numerous, instances of Christians put to death in various places, the first of the ten general persecutions, as they are usually called, took place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and under the reign of the monster Nero. The account of that persecution which is introduced into the history of that emperor by the Latin author, Tacitus, who wrote towards the end of the first century, will ever excite in the breasts of Christians feelings of peculiar pain and horror. He writes, it is true, just in that contumelious way of the Christians which is to be expected in an unbeliever and a heathen idolater, and yet in a way which most fearfully corroborates and illustrates the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction concerning his followers being abused and murdered, and hated of all men for his sake. After giving a long description of the dreadful fire at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, and the 64th of our Saviour, by which a great part of the city was destroyed, and of the measures taken to rebuild it and to calm the people, Tacitus† proceeds thus. "But neither by human help, nor the largesses of the emperor, nor the expiations

\* Acts vii. 59, xii. 2. † Annal. xv. 44. "Sed non ope humana," &c.



offered to the gods, was the infamy abated that the fire had been raised by his orders. To suppress this rumour, therefore, Nero accused falsely, and punished with the most excruciating tortures, those people, who being hated for their crimes, were commonly called Christians. The founder of this denomination, Christ, was punished with death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, the origin of the evil, but even through the city, whither flow from every quarter, and where are perpetrated, all atrocious and shameful things. Therefore, at first, those only were seized who confessed themselves (of that sect), afterwards a prodigious multitude, on their information, were joined with them, not so much in the accusation of being incendiaries, as of hatred to the human race. Mockery accompanied their execution; so that some were clothed in the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs; others were crucified; others (being daubed over with pitch), when the light of day failed, were set fire to as torches, and thus burnt to death.\* Nero had given his own gardens for that spectacle, and exhibited the diversions of the circus, he himself, in the dress of a charioteer, mixed with the common people, or contended in the race,† or ring. Hence, towards those men, though guilty, and deserving of the most uncommon punishments, a commiseration arose, as people cut off, not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of one man."

This most striking passage is very valuable on several accounts. It is valuable, as proving, from the pen of a heathen, who had access to know, and who was guided by the universal voice, that there did actually exist such a person as Christ, who was put to death in Judea at the time, and by the authority referred to in the New Testament. It is valuable as proving also, in conformity with Christ's parable of the grain of mustard-seed, the very rapid spread of the gospel; for, if those who were apprehended in Rome alone at this early period deserved to be called a "prodigious multitude," the whole number of Christians throughout the world must have been very great. As to the vague charge of crimes, neither proved nor specified, that need not be regarded; nay, the testimony is honourable to the Christians so far as it is specific, for it declares that they were innocent

\* Juvenal, viii. 235, "*Molesta tunica*;" and Martial, x. 26.

† "*Circulo insistens*."

of the particular crime of which they were then accused, and that the public good did not require their punishment; in short, the testimony proves that this was purely a religious persecution. As to the charge of "hatred to the human race," that may seem strange when it is considered that love was the very badge of Christianity. Yet the charge is to be accounted for thus:—True Christians do really desire the temporal and eternal welfare of all men, even of their enemies; but they cannot think, and a regard to truth will not allow them to speak as if they thought, that those who reject the gospel are safe; nay, they cannot but be earnest that all should repent and believe. But, those whom their zeal does not amend, it displeases; and thus, by such persons, their very benevolence is considered as bigotry, uncharitableness, and malice. In this way, it did not require the cruelty of a Nero to prompt to the persecution of the Christians, for equal enormities were afterwards perpetrated against that unoffending people, by the emperors who were extolled to the skies by historians for piety and humanity. Such is the interpretation which the unrenewed mind is ever ready to put on the enlightened and faithful procedure of the people of God. But the clause on which we are remarking\* is ambiguous in the original, and admits also of being rendered so as to intimate that the persecution in question was raised against the Christians "on account of the hatred of the human race to them:" and, in this sense, it was, doubtless, very true. Unbelievers, imputing hatred and uncharitableness to the Christians, would naturally hate them, as they supposed, in return. The very excellence and purity of the true Christian character, instead of pleasing, would offend those on whom, by contrast, it was a satire and a censure, and thus call forth their hatred. It is in this way that the natural enmity of the human heart to God, and his cause, and his people, is cherished in every age. On the whole, the passage is a most striking commentary on our Lord's prediction that his disciples were to be persecuted and put to death, and hated of all men, for his name's sake.

The same may be said of the passage in the life of Nero, by Suetonius, who flourished in the end of the first and the beginning of the second century of the Christian era. The passage is very brief, and states neither the nature nor the extent of the cruelties; it is, however, fearfully expressive:

\* "*Odio humani generis.*"

"The Christians were severely punished—a sort of people of a new and mischievous or magical superstition."\* The word superstition is here evidently used in an unfavourable sense; nor need this occasion any surprise, for, if Suetonius did not look on Christianity as divine, he must have regarded it as a vain and foolish thing. It was, indeed, in one sense, new, seeing only about twenty years had elapsed between this persecution and Christ's ascension. This, however, was no sufficient objection, when there was abundant evidence of its divine origin. But it was, in another sense, the most ancient of all religions, as it had existed, in some form, from the time that the promise was given that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. If the writer called it mischievous, or impious, he must have done so under the impression of its tendency to overturn what he reckoned sacred, and because of some false reports he had heard of its tendency, and of its effects on those who had embraced it. He was offended on the first ground, because of the blindness of his mind, carried away with dumb idols just as he was led; and the second ground of offence would have vanished had he examined, with any candour, a religion which was so strongly marked with the character of beneficence. If, again, we consider him as designating Christianity as "magical," then that would be a proof that some extraordinary power was laid claim to by Christians. But we know that everything that was properly called magical was strictly forbidden to the worshippers of the true God, and utterly abhorred by them; the word, therefore, could only express a general, received opinion that Christian teachers wrought miracles. This passage, too, as well as the former, clearly proves that these punishments were inflicted on the Christians for Christ's sake, and that this was strictly a persecution for their religion.†

Verse 18: "*But there shall not an hair of your head perish.*" This was a proverbial way of expressing the perfect security of the disciples—of declaring that they should not sustain the least injury. Now, this verse, from its position, may be explained in connection, either with what goes before, or with what follows it. If taken in connection with what precedes it, it must be understood in a sense consistent with the declaration that some of the disciples were to be persecuted to death, and thus it would contain,

\* "Afflicti suppliciis, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et malificæ."

† "Nominis prælium"—"a war against the very name."—*Tertullian*.

not a promise of the preservation of all their lives, but an assurance that, whatever they might suffer, and however some of them might be cut off for Christ's sake, they would be no losers, but gainers thereby; as when he said before, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Yet it must be confessed that this proverbial expression is most frequently used to denote, not only security in general, but the preservation of life more especially. Thus, when Saul proposed to put Jonathan to death, the people interposed, saying, "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid; as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not." David, too, said to the woman of Tekoah, who represented the revengers of blood as ready to kill her son, "As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth." And the two declarations of Paul respecting those who were on board the ship with him in the storm, are plainly synonymous, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you," and, "There shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you."\* If the verse is to be understood in this sense, then it intimates that, whatever might befall some of Christ's disciples on other occasions, none of them should lose their lives at the overthrow of Jerusalem; and so it happened, as we shall afterwards find. How secure the faithful followers of Jesus! "The very hairs of their head are all numbered." While their Lord has anything for them to do, and as long as it would be good for them to remain on earth, their lives are safe under the protection of his providence; and, when his wisdom sees fit to call them away, whether in quietness or in violence, they are placed beyond the reach of danger for ever.

"*In your patience possess ye your souls*," adds our Lord, in the close of the passage before us. The words, taken exactly as they are here, contain an exhortation to the disciples to exercise that patience in the dangerous and trying crisis, which would enable them to maintain self-possession, and thus contribute both to their safety and to their happiness. Such a composed and steady frame of mind it is equally the duty and interest of all believers to maintain at all times. Some, however, think that the verse may be more exactly rendered, "In, or by, your perseverance, pre-

\* 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam. xiv. 7, 11; Acts xxvii. 22, 34.

serve, or ye shall preserve, your souls or lives;”\* and thus, the verse would intimate, primarily, that those who persevered in their allegiance to Christ would escape with their life, at the time of the national overthrow which was approaching; and, secondarily, that all who, in any age, continued faithful while they were on earth, should obtain everlasting salvation. In this view, this verse would be of the same meaning with what appears to be the exactly corresponding part of the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark: “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”† Let us all remember the necessity of perseverance in order to final safety. “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,” saith the Lord. Let us not, then, be “of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

In reference to what took place in fulfilment of this eighth sign before the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as to the shocking extent to which the same system was carried afterwards, we may well say, *How extreme the guilt and folly of persecution!* It was bad in heathens, it was worse in Jews, but it is worst of all in those who assume the Christian name. We see its enormity in the cases now noticed: let us see its enormity in all cases whatever. To imprison, to banish, to torture, to put to death, under any pretence of religion, how foolish, how unlawful, how criminal! “Christ never used anything that looked like force or violence, except once, and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in.”‡ Persecution is founded on the false supposition that one man has a right to judge for another in religion; it tends to universal misery and confusion; it is not calculated to promote the end it has professedly in view, unless carried on to extermination; if it were universal and perpetual, true Christianity must, humanly speaking, be rooted out; and it is expressly contrary to the precepts and the whole spirit of the Gospel of Christ, who came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them, and who requires of his followers to exercise gentleness, and “in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Yet, to what a dreadful pitch has it been carried against those of whom the world was not worthy, especially by Pagan and Popish power!

\* See Dr Campbell’s Translation and Notes.

† Matt. xxiv, 13; Mark xiii, 13.

‡ Jortin.

Who can peruse such accounts without the most painful feelings, and without heaving a sigh over the depravity and frenzy of man? May a God of mercy suppress for ever this worst of evils, and cause love and forbearance everywhere to reign.

The wisdom and goodness of the Lord may, however, be observed, even in these appalling scenes; for persecution became the means of making Christianity more known and more observed, and of proving and purifying its adherents, while their Lord supported and comforted them in the midst of it, and, at last, removed them to the exceeding blessedness of his heavenly presence. Let us here feel cautioned not even to entertain a wish to employ such a weapon as this against others, and carefully to guard against harbouring any hatred and uncharitableness in our hearts towards those who differ from us. Surely, we ought to be very thankful that we ourselves are exempted, in the kind providence of God, from the heavier kinds of persecution. Were these, however, again to arise against us (as there is reason to believe that they will arise before the consummation of all things, which the overthrow of Jerusalem typified), we behoved, with God's help, to make up our minds to bear them. At all events, if we are faithful, and "live godly in Christ Jesus," we must expect to suffer some of the lighter kinds of persecution; we must expect to be exposed, more or less, to the dislike and bad treatment of ungodly and worldly men. The world will hate us, as it hated our Master before us, if, like him, we "testify of it that its deeds are evil." But let us bear patiently any opposition or contumely which may come on us because of our attachment to him who, for our sake, "hid not his face from shame and spitting," and did not hesitate to lay down his life.

We may briefly notice two other signs of the approach of Jerusalem's ruin which were given by our Lord, though they are not written down by Luke. In Matt. xxiv. 12, Jesus says, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." There was to be extreme wickedness among the Jews at large; and that this was so appears from the whole tenor of Josephus' history, as well as from sacred Scripture. There was also to be a great backsliding on the part of many professing Christians, of the fulfilment of which the Epistles furnish many proofs. Thus, we find the apostle Paul complaining, and saying to the

Galatians, "Where is the blessedness ye spake of?" and to Timothy, "Thou knowest that all they who are in Asia are turned away from me," and, "At my first answer" (in Rome) "no man stood with me, but, all men forsook me;" and, to the Hebrews, that it was "the manner of some to forsake the assembling of themselves together." Similar prevalence of iniquity, and similar backslidings, are also to be expected before the end of all things.\* Let us be on our guard; and let us abide in Christ's love, and hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

The remaining sign is found both in Matthew and Mark, and is given in Matthew thus: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The following is a very condensed account of the fulfilment of this sign:—"It appears, from the most credible records, that the gospel was preached in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, by Jude; in Egypt, Marmorica, Mauritania, and other parts of Africa, by Mark, Simon, and Jude; in Ethiopia, by Candace's eunuch and Matthias; in Pontus, Galatia, and the neighbouring parts of Asia, by Peter; in the territories of the seven Asiatic Churches, by John; in Parthia, by Matthew; in Scythia, by Philip and Andrew; in the northern and western parts of Asia, by Bartholomew; in Persia, by Simon and Jude; in Media, Carmania, and several eastern parts, by Thomas; through the vast tract from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, by Paul; as also in Italy, and probably in Spain, Gaul, and Britain" (though this is questionable); "in most of which places Christian Churches were planted in less than thirty years after the death of Christ, which was before the destruction of Jerusalem."† This very rapid and extensive spread of the gospel, not only without, but against, the influence of human power and learning, is justly considered as one of the many evidences of its divine origin. It was preached, then, throughout the greater part of the then known world, before the destruction of Jerusalem; but, as that calamity is a type of the judgment day, this particular sign waits for its more perfect fulfilment before that period, and should be viewed in encouraging connection with the Saviour's command and promise, "Go and teach all nations,"

\* 2 Thess. ii. 3.

† Doddridge. Dr Arthur Young on Idolatry, vol. ii. p. 216, &c. See Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6, 23.

“and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Such are the ten signs which our Lord gave to denote that Jerusalem's fatal day was at hand, and in some measure, probably, also to denote the approach of the general judgment. The disciples marked these signs well, and profited by them. So let us observe and discern the signs of our own times; let us mark the general state of affairs, and the leadings of providence, for our awakening, and admonition, and encouragement, and warning. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”



## LECTURE CXII.

LUKE XXI. 20-24.

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

THOUGH our Lord declined to state to the disciples the exact time when Jerusalem was to be overthrown, he forewarned them of certain signs which were to precede it, and from the appearance of which, it might be known that it was drawing on. These signs, to the number of ten, we have already examined. The event referred to in the first of the verses now read, namely, the actual investing of Jerusalem, might, indeed, be considered as another, and as the last sign, yet it seems proper to regard this circumstance rather as a part of the final catastrophe than as a token of it.

“*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.*” In Matthew (xxiv. 15), the warning runs thus: “When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand).” The passage here chiefly referred to is in Daniel ix. 26, 27: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined,

shall be poured upon the desolate." Similar to this is the passage in Daniel xi. 31: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." These passages in Daniel are exceedingly interesting and remarkable in many respects; but, as it would lead too far away from the subject in hand to attempt to clear up their chronology, and explain everything embraced in them, let us confine ourselves to what is directly to our present purpose.

"The prince" here mentioned was evidently Vespasian, the tenth of the Roman emperors, or of the twelve Cæsars; and the people of that prince were as evidently the Roman army; and the city and the sanctuary were Jerusalem and its temple. As to the phrase, "the abomination of desolation," or, "the abomination that maketh desolate," we have to remember, first of all, that every idol, or false god, is called an abomination, and justly, for every thing of the kind is an object of detestation and abhorrence to the Almighty, and to every truly pious mind. Thus, we find the following expressions in different parts of the Old Testament:—"Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians?"—"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord."—"Ash-taroath, the abomination of the Zidonians; Chemish, the abomination of the Moabites; and Milcom, the abomination of the children of Ammon."—"Shall I make the residue (of the tree) an abomination?" Now, the Roman army was very aptly called "an abomination," on account of its idolatrous ensigns; for figures of eagles, which were the usual standards, and sometimes the images of the emperors, both of which were worshipped, were carried at the head of their legions, and were, of course, justly regarded as objects of abhorrence, by those who knew the true God. Indeed, the religion of the Roman camp consisted almost entirely in worshipping the ensigns, swearing by the ensigns, and in preferring the ensigns before all the other gods.\* Josephus† mentions, that after they had taken the city, they "brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate, and offered sacrifices to them there." And the Roman army was well called the abomination of desolation, or, "that maketh desolate," because of the awful desolation it wrought in its victorious career. By "the holy

\* Tertullian, Ap. xvi.

† Wars, VI. vi. 1.

place,"\* however, in which the Roman army was to be seen standing, is to be understood, not the temple, but the ground in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, which was considered holy, as well as the city itself: indeed, the whole of Judea was called the Holy Land. What is thus expressed somewhat darkly from Daniel, is expressed in the plainest language in Luke: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies." "*Then know*," added our Lord, "*that the desolation thereof is nigh*." He directed his disciples to consider the sitting down of the Roman army before the city as a mark that its ruin was just at hand, and as an intimation to them to make their escape. There is a time when it is a duty to resist foreign power; and there is a time to submit. Resistance is folly, when it cannot succeed. When the will of God was made known to Jeremiah,† he exhorted the Jews to submit to the Chaldeans; but they would not, and the consequences were most fatal. From the place where Jehovah has declared that he will pour out his wrath to the uttermost, the faith of his people will urge them to fly. Thus Lot left Sodom, and the Israelites departed from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. As the Jews would not yield to the Romans, nothing remained for the Christians, who had firm faith in the divine predictions, but to save themselves by flight.

"*Then let them who are in Judea*," in the low country, and the most frequented parts of it, "*flee to the mountains*," whither the enemy would be less likely to follow them, or, where the inhabitants, remaining in obedience to the Romans, would be safe; "*and*" especially, "*let them who are in the midst of it*"—in the midst of Judea,‡ where Jerusalem stood—"depart out"—depart immediately, before they were so hemmed in that they could not afterwards retire; "*and let not them that are in the countries*," that is, in the countries adjacent to Judea, "*enter thereinto*"—let them by no means think of gathering into Judea, and least of all into its capital, Jerusalem, in the hope of safety there; for the great strength, and high privileges, and boasted sanctity, of the holy city itself, would prove no defence against the overthrow fixed by the just decree of the Almighty. In the parallel passage of Matthew (and words very similar occur in

\* Ἐν ἁγίῳ τόπῳ, in a holy place, or on holy ground, not ἐν ἁγίῳ.

† Jer. xxvii.

‡ I adhere to this as the most natural meaning, notwithstanding Dr Campbell's note, which would refer the "it" to Jerusalem.

Mark), we read: "Let him who is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house." We had occasion to speak before\* of the flat-roofed houses of the East, and of the purposes for which the inhabitants went out on the roofs. It may be sufficient to remark here, that, as an illustration of the extreme necessity of immediate flight, those who might be on the roofs of their houses taking the air, or engaged in any employment, or looking out, were directed, on their seeing the Roman army advancing, not to enter through the window, or opening on the roof, into their houses, for the purpose of carrying away any of their property, however valuable, lest they should linger so as to lose the opportunity of escape altogether, or lest what they carried with them should so impede them in their flight as to cause them to be taken, but to descend by the outer stair, and flee as fast as possible. "Neither" (it is added in Matthew) "let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes;" that is, let not him who is at work in the field, and has, as usual, laid aside his loose upper garment,† return, to his house it may be, or rather, turn back a few steps, or a land's length,‡ to take it. This was an exceedingly strong way of pressing on them the necessity of instant flight.

"*For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*" The time of the overthrow of the city, and of the events connected with it, might be called, by way of eminence, "the days of vengeance," and days to which the most dreadful threatenings of the prophets, from Moses to Christ, had a special reference, and in which they were to receive a most awful accomplishment.

"*But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.*" While the terror and misery of such a time would be great to all, they would be especially great to women in either of these conditions, and, it may be added, to children, and the aged, and the infirm, and all to whom flight would be impracticable, or very difficult, and to whom the being shut in, in a helpless state, would be awful. The result will show that some compromised their own safety by attending to their helpless relations,

\* Luke xii. 3, xvii. 31.

† — Γυμνὸν στήθεσιν, γυμνὸν δὲ βούτῳ,

Γυμνὸν δὲ ἄμην. — HESIODI Opera et Dies, 391.

‡ Nudus ara, sere nudus. Hiems ignava colono." — VIRG. Georg. i. 299.

‡ Doddridge.

while others consulted their own security by deserting, and even destroying them; both of which cases were truly deplorable, though the latter was much more deplorable than the former.

Our Lord here says, according to Matthew, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day." In winter, the shortness of the day, the inclemency of the weather, and the badness of the roads, would render flight and absence from home peculiarly distressing.\* If our Lord referred to the Jewish Sabbath-day, it is to be remembered that the Jews, generally speaking, carried the idea of the rest required on that day unreasonably far, and might have opposed any movement on that day, however urgent the circumstances. If there was here a reference to the Christian Sabbath, and to enlightened, and, at the same time, strict views of its observance, then the words imply that Christians, though not only permitted, but bound, as a work of necessity and mercy, to fly, even on that day, in order to save their lives, would yet be scrupulous not to violate the day by needless exertion, and, if necessitated to fly on the sacred day, would justly consider that an aggravation of the calamity. On this, we may remark, that it is the duty and privilege of the people of God, in the time of their straits, to have recourse to prayer; that where they cannot expect to have a trouble altogether averted, they may look for an alleviation of it; and that, instead of studiously, or indiscriminately travelling on the Lord's-day, they will shun it if they can, and will feel everything that takes from them the quietness of the Sabbath, and the services of the sanctuary, as a heavy privation.

In pronouncing the woe, our Lord says, "*For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people:*" in Matthew, the words are, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to

\* For example, the flight of the French from Moscow, under Bonaparte. Lightfoot quotes a passage from a Jewish Rabbi to this effect: "God vouchsafed a great favour to Israel (when the first temple was destroyed), for they ought to have gone out of the land on the 10th day of the month Tebeth (December). If they shall now go out in the winter," saith he, "they will all die; therefore, he prolonged the time, and carried them away in summer." Josephus (Wars, book vi.) says, that the second temple was burnt on the same day of the year with the first, namely, on the 10th day of the month Ab, which corresponded nearly to July; and that the Romans got entire possession of the whole city on the 8th day of Ebul, which corresponded nearly to August. The Christians, however, seem to have escaped long before.

this time, no, nor ever shall be." Though this might be regarded only as a very strong way of expressing exceedingly great distress, it seems intended, to be understood in an absolute sense, as intimating that, taking all circumstances into consideration, no nation ever was, or ever will be, subjected to calamities so dreadful. On the details of these calamities we are just entering; meanwhile, it may be enough to quote the deliberate opinion of Josephus; and the coincidence of his expressions with those of Christ as given by Matthew, is very striking: "It appears to me that the misfortunes of all men from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to those of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were."—"This makes it impossible for me to contain my lamentations." And at an advanced period of his history, he says: "No other city ever suffered such things."

But to proceed with the history:—Our Lord had solemnly warned his disciples to make their escape as speedily as possible, when they saw the Romans beginning to set about the siege of Jerusalem; accordingly, though none of the apostles, except John, lived till that time, many of his other followers did, and a new race of converts had arisen, and all of these profited by the warning. On one occasion, an opportunity to those of them who were in Jerusalem was afforded of escaping, in a very providential way. Cestius Gallus, who commanded the Roman army at an early period of the war, and who had laid siege to Jerusalem, and might have taken it and finished the contest in a short time, without cause, raised the siege and retreated with great loss;\* and Josephus adds, that after this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews left the city, as men leave a sinking ship. All the Christians who yet remained in Jerusalem and the neighbouring country, seem to have now removed. The ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, who was born in Palestine, in the year of our Lord 267, says, that "before the war, all the faithful of the Church of Jerusalem were admonished by an oracle delivered to men approved there, to depart from the city, and to get over Jordan, and go to Pella;" and Epiphanius, who was born before Eusebius died, says that they were "warned by an angel to depart from the city, as being now ready to perish."† In this way, the Christians were pre-

\* Wars, II. xix. 7, xx. 1.

† Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iii. Epiph. adversus Nazaræos, i. 7.

served, so that we do not read of one of them falling at the siege of Jerusalem; and the promise of their Lord was fulfilled, "There shall not an hair of your head perish." Very few of the infatuated people, however, availed themselves of the opportunity of escaping, and it was soon impossible to get away. As the warning given by the Redeemer was not kept secret, but published, both by word and writing, for the benefit of all who would avail themselves of it, it is melancholy to observe that the temporal ruin of the multitude can hardly be looked on in any other light than that of an emblem of their endless ruin.

Vespasian, who was now in the command of the Roman army in Judea, hearing of commotions in Gaul, and of other dangers to the state, resolved to carry on the war briskly against the Jews. Having ravaged various parts of the country, he commenced the siege of Jerusalem. "And now," says Josephus,\* "those that were in Jerusalem were deprived of the liberty of going out of the city; for, as to such as had a mind to desert, they were watched by the Zealots; and as to such as were not yet on the side of the Romans, their army kept them in, by encompassing the city round about on all sides." About this time, however, intelligence was received by Vespasian of the death of the emperor Nero, on which Vespasian quitted Judea for scenes still more flattering to his ambition. After the very short reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, Vespasian, who had been already proclaimed emperor by the army, succeeded to the throne of the Cæsars by universal consent. On his retiring from Judea, he left the command of the army to his son, who was of the same name with himself, Titus Flavius Vespasian, and who afterwards succeeded to the imperial purple, as the eleventh of the twelve Cæsars. For the sake of distinction, it is common to call the father Vespasian and the son Titus. To this Titus a very select army was intrusted, with express orders to destroy Jerusalem, unless the Jews submitted.

Already the miseries endured in that city from internal causes were dreadful. There was no one leader whom the besieged would agree to follow. They were divided into three parties, and fought fiercely with each other, though none of them would hear of a surrender to the foreign enemy. The tyrants Simon, John, and Eleazar, are spoken of by the Jewish historian, as ruling with a rod of iron, and

\* Wars, IV. ix. l.

committing great excesses. Various bloody insurrections took place, and the Zealots, a set of violent robbers and murderers, perpetrated shocking atrocities. The confusion and mutual slaughter were appalling. These dissensions are styled by Josephus, "the beginning of the city's destruction." Referring to one of these contests between the Jewish factions, he says,\* "The darts that were thrown by the engines came with such force, that they went all over the buildings, and reached as far as the altar, and the temple itself, and fell upon the priests, and those that were about the sacred offices; insomuch that many persons who came thither with great zeal, to offer sacrifice at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind, fell down before their own sacrifices, and sprinkled the altar with their own blood, till the dead bodies of strangers were mingled with those of their own country, and those of profane persons with those of the priests, and the blood of all sorts of dead carcases stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves. And now, O most wretched city! what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify thee from thine intestine hatred? But I must restrain myself from these passions by the rules of history, since this is not a proper time for domestic lamentations, but for historical accounts."

Many attacks were made by the Romans, with various success; and great numbers were slain on both sides. But, without particularizing these, we must, in order to preserve the continuity of the history, mention what was formerly noticed on the 43d verse of the 19th chapter, in which our Lord said, "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee," or, surround thee with a rampart, "and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side." Anxious to take as decisive steps as possible for the reduction of the city, Titus gave orders to surround it entirely with a wall, which the army accomplished in three days.† This had the effect of altogether preventing the egress of any from the city, and the introducing of any provisions into it. The miseries which then ensued were beyond description. It is to be remembered that the number of persons then in Jerusalem was prodigious; multitudes had come up to worship at the feast of the passover, and multitudes had retired into it before the

\* V. ii. 3. Whiston's translation is generally quoted, though not always.

† See Lecture cii.



enemy, for supposed security: it contained at this time, probably, near three millions of people.\* Though this vast multitude was collected out of remote places, "the entire nation might be said to be shut up by Providence, as in a prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world." Hitherto no foreign nation came on the Jews in this way during any of their three great feasts, according to the promise of God, "Neither shall any man desire thy land when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year."† Now, however, that they had forfeited all interest in this promise by consummating their national guilt, they were environed for destruction when they were assembled at the most solemn of all their feasts. This immense number crowded together, "occasioned, at the very first, so great a straitness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon after, such a famine as destroyed them more suddenly. At an early period, store-houses containing provisions which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years," were burnt to the ground in intestine commotions. Thus, "the nerves of their power" were destroyed, and the famine began much earlier than could have been imagined, and soon reached a pitch of intense severity.

The following is a small part of the description Josephus gives of the effects of the famine before the city was hemmed in so completely by the wall:—"The madness of the seditious did also increase together with their famine, and both these miseries were every day inflamed more and more: for there was no corn which anywhere appeared publicly, but the robbers came running into, and searched men's private houses; and then, if they found any, they tormented them, because they had denied they had any; and if they found none, they tormented them worse, because they supposed they had more carefully concealed it." Some "shut themselves up in the inmost rooms of their houses, and ate the corn they had gotten; some did it, without grinding it, by reason of the extremity of the want they were in; and others baked bread of it, according as necessity and fear dictated to them; a table was nowhere laid for a regular meal, but they snatched the bread out

\* See Jos. Wars, VI. ix. 3, 4.

† Exod. xxxiv. 24.

of the fire, half-baked, and ate it very hastily.”—“The famine was too hard for all passions;” “what was otherwise worthy of reverence was, in this case, despised, in-somuch that children pulled the morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives.”—“The old men, who held their food fast, were beaten; and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing.”—“They also invented terrible methods of torment to discover where any food was.”\* The progress of the famine after the wall was built is thus described:† “Now, of those who perished by famine in the city, the number was prodigious, and the miseries they underwent were unspeakable; for if so much as the shadow of any kind of food did anywhere appear, a war was commenced presently, and the dearest friends fell a-fighting one with another about it, snatching from each other the most miserable supports of life.”—“Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew everything:” “the very leather which was on their shields they pulled off and gnawed.” The historian then goes on to relate all the particulars of a fact, for the truth of which he declares he had innumerable witnesses, namely, that of a woman of eminent rank and wealth, whose name and descent he gives, who, having been stripped and plundered of all her goods and provisions, in hunger, rage, and despair, killed and roasted her babe at her breast, and had eaten part of him before the horrid deed was discovered. The report of this miserable atrocity filled the city with horror and trembling; “those that were distressed by the famine were very desirous to die; and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or to see such miseries.” Now the threatening by the prophet Moses,‡ which had formerly been partially accomplished when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, and when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, received its most dire fulfilment: “It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God,” “all these curses shall come upon thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city;

\* Wars, V. x. 2, 3.

† Wars, VI. iii. 3, 4.

‡ Deut. xxviii.; 2 Kings vi. 26; Lam. iv. 9.

and cursed shalt thou be in the field.”—“The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far.”—“And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates.”—“And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee; so that the man that is tender among you and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave; so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat; because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eyes shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter;” “for she shall eat them for want of all things, secretly, in the siege wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.” Josephus states the number of those who died of famine in this siege, at eleven thousand.

Let us, before concluding at this time, notice only one other ingredient in the cup of trembling which this guilty, miserable, obstinate, and infatuated people, had now to drink out to the very dregs, namely, the way in which those of them who were taken prisoners during the siege were treated by the Romans. The number of prisoners was very great, including not only those who were taken after having sallied out for the express purpose of fighting, but those whom the severity of the famine within the city made so bold as to venture down into the valleys in the hope of finding something to allay their hunger. In the words of Josephus, “When these were going to be taken, they were forced to defend themselves, for fear of being punished; as, after they had fought, they thought it too late to make any supplications for mercy; so they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city. This miserable procedure made Titus pity them greatly, while they caught every day five hundred Jews, nay, some days they caught more; yet did it not appear to be safe for him to let those that were taken by force go their way; and to set a guard over so many, he saw would be to make such as guarded

them useless to him. The main reason why he did not forbid that cruelty was this, that he hoped the Jews might perhaps yield at that sight, out of fear lest they might themselves afterwards be liable to the same cruel treatment. So, the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; till their multitude became so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses were wanting for the bodies!!” \*—How dreadful! What a fearful sight this must have been to the Jews from the walls of their city! Yet here, if in anything, they might have read their sin in their punishment. Just, indeed, however tremendous, was this providential retribution. This is the people who delivered up the Son of God, and denied him before Pilate, when he was determined to let him go—the people who denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them—the people who were instant with loud voices that the Saviour should be crucified, crying out, “Not this man, but Barabbas; away with this man! Crucify him, crucify him!” Well, they obtained their impious wish; and what is the consequence? Here they now stand in pinching famine, and wan despair, beholding from their walls and battlements, their countrymen crucified before their eyes, till room cannot be found for the crosses, and crosses cannot be found for the bodies! This awful circumstance speaks for itself, and requires no comment. Here, as at the most suitable place, let us pause in the dreadful history, which, God willing, we shall resume in the next Lecture.

\* Wars, V., xi. 1.

## LECTURE CXIII.

LUKE XXI. 20-24.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE last circumstance we noticed was the way in which those Jews who, on venturing without the walls of Jerusalem during the siege, having been taken prisoners, were treated by the Romans: they were first whipped and tortured in various ways, and then crucified, and that, too, in such numbers, that at last room could not be found for the crosses, nor crosses for the bodies. As the siege advanced, the miseries of the guilty and devoted nation increased in variety and aggravation. So very dreadful were they, that, had they continued much longer, the whole people must have been cut off. According to our Lord's words in Matthew, \* "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." There are some interpreters who, probably from a dislike to the unvarnished scriptural doctrine of election, are for confining this clause, "for the elect's sake," to those who were then already converted to Christianity. Though that were the true and sole application of it, the explanation would not answer the purpose of those who give it, seeing it is taught as plainly as possible, in the Word of God, that the elect are not elected or chosen after they are holy, and because they are holy, but before they are holy, and in order to their becoming holy.† It is to be remembered, however, that though, at the period in question, the Christians might be exposed to some inconvenience and hardship, none of them were slain or lost their lives in any way in the siege, for they had all fled to places of safety. The elect, therefore, must here mean chiefly, if not solely, those yet unconverted Jews in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, who themselves, or whose descendants.

\* Matt. xxiv. 22.

† See Eph. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2.

were afterwards to become partakers of the blessings of salvation—those, in short, who belonged, as the apostle Paul expresses it,\* to “the election of grace.” Various circumstances contributed providentially to shorten the siege, especially the internal feuds, the burning of the corn, the strong feeling of Titus that “the length of the siege would diminish the glory of his success,” the inclosing of the city with the wall, and the desertion by the Jews of strong towers from which it seemed impossible, humanly speaking, to have dislodged them. These things hastened the reduction of the city.

Still, however, when their affairs were in a desperate condition, they were elated with false hopes, and encouraged to continue their resistance, and to despise all the offers which the humanity of Titus held out to them. This obstinacy was, in some measure, owing to impostors. According to the prophecy, as given in this part more fully by Matthew and Mark, there were to arise “false Christs and false prophets,” who should “show,” or pretend to show, “great signs and wonders.” On this, the Jewish historian† furnishes the following unintentional but exact commentary. After relating the destruction of women and children, and a mixed multitude, to the number of about six thousand, in the cloisters of the outer court of the temple, he says, “A false prophet was the occasion of these people’s destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who announced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes.” Thus did the wicked people, who had rejected the true Christ, the great Prophet of God, who would have secured their peace for ever, eagerly listen to almost every pretender who assumed the name, though, in doing so, they were drawn into temporal and eternal ruin. May none of us wilfully resist the truth, lest God, in righteous judgment, “send us strong delusion, to believe a lie.”

Whatever imposture might pretend, or the blindness of reprobate minds expect, the doom of the nation was fixed

\* Rom. xi. 5.

† Wars, VI., v. 2.

in the divine purpose, foretold in sacred prophecy, and drawing on apace. It is unnecessary to describe the many means that were employed for attack or for defence, the many assaults that were made, and desperate struggles that took place. Nor shall we stop to mark how the Romans obtained possession of one wall and tower after another, and first the lower and then the upper part of the city. Let us hasten to the close of the sanguinary and dismal scene.

*“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword.”* Not to enter into the details of the massacres by the factions, or of the thousands who were slain by the foreign enemy before, let us only notice part of the account given by Josephus,\* of what took place in the sacking of the city, and his summary of the whole loss sustained by the Jews. The Romans, on obtaining possession of the upper city, or Mount Zion, “when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses whither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is, of such as died by the famine; they then stood in horror at this sight, and went out without touching anything. But, though they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet they had not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood. And, though the slayers left off at the evening, yet the fire greatly prevailed in the night.”—“And now since his soldiers were quite tired with killing men, and yet there appeared to be a vast multitude still remaining alive, Titus gave orders that they should kill none but those that were in arms, and opposed them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm.” The historian says, “The number of those who perished during the whole siege was eleven hundred thousand.” But, for the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy, “They shall fall by the edge of the sword,” we are to look, not merely to those who fell in the siege of Jerusalem, but to those who perished during the whole war, in the various battles, sieges, and massacres.

\* Wars, VI., viii. 5; IX., ii. 3.

A very great number of every age, condition, and sex, perished, of whom no account is kept; but of those that are reckoned by Josephus as having been slain during this war on various occasions at different places, the number amounts to about one million three hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred and sixty.\*

*"And they shall be led away captive into all nations."*

The number of the slain was so prodigious that the number of the captives was necessarily much smaller; yet it was great. Josephus says the number of those who were carried captive, during the whole war, was ninety-seven thousand. Of those who were taken captive after the work of slaughter ceased in Jerusalem, he gives this account: "Of the young men, Fronto, by Titus' orders, chose out the tallest and most beautiful, and reserved them for the triumph; and as for the rest of the multitude that were above seventeen years of age, he put them into bonds, and sent them to the Egyptian mines. Titus also sent a great number into the provinces, as a present to them, that they might be destroyed in their theatres, by the sword and by the wild beasts; but those who were under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves. Eleven thousand of these captives perished of want while the separation of them was making. At Cesarea Philippi, Titus exhibited all kinds of public spectacles; and here a great number of the captives were destroyed by being exposed to the wild beasts, or by being compelled to fight against each other, for the amusement of the populace. While he was at Cesarea, in honour of his brother Domitian's birth-day, two thousand five hundred Jews were slain in similar ways. And when he came to Berytus, a great number of the captives were destroyed in honour of his father's birth-day. He did the same soon after in other cities of Syria."† Thus they were "led away captive into all nations."

We must here briefly notice again the total destruction of the city, which we were obliged to anticipate in showing the fulfilment of the words in the 19th chapter, 44th verse.‡ With the slight exceptions of three towers and a small part of the western wall, that posterity might, from these specimens, properly appreciate the arduous task which the Romans had accomplished, all the walls and other buildings

\* So it is in Horne's Introduction; but by Usher, from Lipsius, 1,337,490.

† Wars VI., ix.; VII., ii., iii.

‡ See Lecture cii.



were levelled with the ground; to repeat the words of Josephus, "For all the rest," "it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those who dug it up to the foundations, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."

We declined entering on the consideration, when it came in course, of the 6th verse of this chapter, in which, in consequence of the admiration of the buildings of the temple expressed by the disciples, our Lord said, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Now, however, is the natural time to show its fulfilment. Though Titus gave directions to burn certain outer parts of the temple, because they afforded the Jews the means of annoying his men, he was anxious to preserve the principal part of so splendid a building, as a monument of the glory of his arms. "But God," says the historian justly, "had for certain long ago doomed it to the fire, and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages: it was the tenth\* day of the month Ab, upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon." The Jews themselves set fire to some of the outer parts, though not with the view of destroying the whole. "Then one of the (Roman) soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread for such an attempt, but urged on by a certain divine impulse, snatched a brand out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window,† through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy place." Titus, being told of the fire as he was resting himself in his tent after the last battle, "rose up in great haste, and ran to the temple, in order to have a stop put to the fire; after him followed all his commanders, and after them followed the several legions, in great astonishment." "Then did Cæsar (Titus), with a loud voice, and by signal with his right hand, order them to quench the fire;" but they either could not or would not hear; nor did they mind the signal. "And as for the legions that came running thither, neither exhortations nor threatenings could restrain their violence;" and "they encouraged those who were before to set fire to the temple." At this moment Titus "went into the holy place of the temple with his com-

\* Another account says the ninth: the fire lasted more days than one.

† So Whiston's translation is.

manders, and beheld it" with admiration. "As the flame did not yet reach to its inner parts, though it was consuming the rooms that were about the holy place, Titus, supposing what was the fact, that the house itself (strictly so called) might even yet be saved, came in haste and endeavoured to persuade the soldiers to quench the fire," and gave orders "to beat with staves those who were refractory." But their rage and hatred for the Jews, and warlike fury, and hope of plunder, overpowered their reverence for their general, and their dread of punishment. To hasten the utter ruin, a soldier set fire to the door, in the dark, in consequence of which the flames soon burst out within. On this, seeing all endeavours to save the sacred house were vain, Titus and his generals retired, and, no further resistance being made, the temple itself was burnt down, "without Cæsar's approbation," nay, contrary to his express orders, and in defiance of all his endeavours. "While the holy house was on fire everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain;" "children, old men, profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner."—"The flame was carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain."—"Nor can any one imagine any thing greater or more terrible than this noise." The shout of the Roman legions, and the sad moans of the people that were left above, were blended together. "The multitude also in the city joined in these cries with those that were upon the hill; and, besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and whose mouths were almost closed, when they saw the flames of the sanctuary, exerted their utmost strength, and again broke out into groans and lamentations. *Peræa* returned the echo, as well as the mountains round about, and augmented the loudness of the entire noise." In this burning of the temple, accompanied with the cruel slaughter and the piercing cries, we trace the fulfilment of the prophecy in the 11th chapter of Zechariah, according to the interpretation which was put on it by Johanan, the Jew, before the event: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen. There is the voice of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of slaughter; for I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land." Not only was the temple burnt, but its ruins were demolished,

and its very foundations were dug up, in compliance with the order of Titus, who, "after the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, commanded them to demolish the temple," as well as the whole city.\* Thus, early after its being burnt, were our Lord's words fulfilled, almost to the letter: "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." If aught of this prophecy yet remained unfulfilled, it was accomplished by Terentius, or Turnus Rufus, whom Titus left in the command of that part of the army which remained in Judea. Maimonides, on the authority of the Talmud, says, "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom,† ploughed up the temple, and the places round about it." This, as the same writer justly remarks, was in fulfilment and to the very letter, of the prophecy of Micah (iii. 12): "Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be ploughed as a field; and Jerusalem shall become heaps; and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." This was after the ancient custom, according to which insulting conquerors sometimes ploughed up the site of cities and fortresses, to intimate that they were totally overthrown, and not to be rebuilt, and that the ground whereon they had stood was to be employed only for agricultural purposes.‡

On his return to Rome, Titus was honoured with a most splendid triumph, along with his father, the emperor. In the procession on that occasion, many Jewish captives were made to walk in chains, and vast quantities of the spoils of Jerusalem were borne along, among which the most conspicuous were several of the sacred utensils taken from the temple.§ In memory of this there was erected the beautiful triumphal arch of Titus, which, though injured, still remains in Rome, and attracts the admiration of all intelligent strangers. On it there are still to be seen, cut in the stone, representations of the procession, especially distinct figures of the golden table, and the golden candlestick, the

\* Wars, VII., i. 1.

† Ps. cxxxvii. 7: "The children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof."

‡ "Ira—

altis urbibus ultima  
Stetere cause cur perirent  
Funditus: imprimeretque muris  
Hostile aratrum exercitus insolens."

HOR., Od. i. 16.

§ Wars, VII., v.

ark of the covenant, and the two trumpets, borne on men's shoulders. This arch is, doubtless, one of the most interesting remains of antiquity.\*

But let us consider the remaining clause of the passage now before us: "*And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" So completely was Judea subjugated, that the very land itself was sold by Vespasian, the Gentiles possessing it, while the Jews were nearly all slain or led into captivity; and Jerusalem has *never since* been in the possession of the Jews. When, indeed, the emperor *Ælius Hadrian* visited the eastern parts of the Roman empire, and found Jerusalem a heap of ruins, forty-seven years after its destruction, he determined to rebuild it, but not exactly on the same spot. He called the new city *Ælia*, after his own name, "placed a Roman colony in it, and dedicated a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, in the room of the temple of Jehovah. This profanation of the holy place was the great cause of the rebellions and sufferings of the Jews during the reign of Hadrian. The city was once more taken by them, and burnt. Hadrian rebuilt it, re-established the colony, ordered the statue of a hog (which the Jews held in religious abhorrence) to be set up over the gate that opened towards Bethlehem, and published an edict strictly forbidding any Jew, on pain of death, to enter the city, or even to look at it from a distance. Thus the city remained till the time of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, who greatly improved it, and restored the name of Jerusalem; but the Jews were not permitted to reside there. When they attempted, in vain, to get possession of their capital, Constantine caused their ears to be cut off, and their bodies to be marked, as rebels, and dispersed them over all the provinces of the empire as fugitives and slaves. The emperor Julian (commonly called the Apostate) from enmity to the Christians, favoured the Jews, and, in the vain hope of contradicting the prophecy concerning it, resolved to

\* Reland, *De Spoliis Templi*. There was also a medal struck in commemoration of the same triumph. On the one side of the medal there is a head of Vespasian, encircled with laurel, together with his titles. On the other side there are a representation of the emperor standing with a trophy, or emblem of victory; a palm tree, which is the emblem of Palestine; and, under the tree, the figure of a dejected woman, sitting weeping, with her head bowed down, and resting on her left hand. The inscription on this side is *JUDÆA CAPTA* (Judea taken). How striking an illustration of the prophecy in Isa. iii. 26: "And she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground."

rebuild the temple, made great preparations with that view, and actually began the work. But Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman historian of acknowledged impartiality and faithfulness, who lived at the time, and died about the year of our Lord 390, gives this remarkable account: "Dreadful balls of fire bursting forth near the foundations, with frequent assaults, made the place inaccessible to the workmen, who were burnt several times."\* Thus the impious attempt was frustrated. The severe edict of Hadrian was revived by Jovian, and continued by the Greek emperors; "so that the wretched Jews used to give money to the soldiers for permission to behold and weep over the ruins of their temple and city, particularly on the return of that memorable day on which it had been taken by the Romans. In the reign of Heraclius, Chosroes, king of Persia, took and plundered Jerusalem, but Heraclius soon recovered the possession of it. In 637, the Christians surrendered it to Omar, the Saracen caliph, who built a mosque upon the site of the temple. It remained in the possession of the Saracens above 400 years, and then was taken by the Turks. They retained it till the year 1099, when the Franks took it, under Godfrey of Boulogne, general of the crusaders. The Franks kept possession eighty-eight years, that is, till 1187, when the Turks, under Saladin, retook it by capitulation, and with them it has remained ever since."† Thus has Jerusalem itself continued to be "trodden down of the Gentiles." But the same may be said of the people to whom it belonged. In every part of the world they have been oppressed and persecuted. Their portion has often been confiscation of goods, deprivation of civil privileges, mockery, imprisonment, banishment, and a violent death. They have been a proverb, and a byword, and a hissing among the nations.

Notwithstanding some alleviations of their distress, they and their city and country are to continue to be trodden down "till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This is, probably, the period during which the Gentiles are to hold the possession of Jerusalem, the expiry of which, it is commonly thought, will correspond with the time of the general success of Christianity among both Jews and Gentiles.

\* The substance of the account is confirmed by Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, who lived during the age referred to, and by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, who lived in the next age. See Mosheim and Lardner. Am. Marcel. xxxiii. 1.

† Horne's Introduction, and Newton on the Prophecies.

Though some are of opinion that the conversion of the Jews to Christianity is all that is necessary to the fulfilment of the various prophecies in their favour, the most commonly received opinion is, that they also include their literal restoration to their own land. This opinion by no means involves the literal interpretation of all the expressions in Scripture relating to the millennium, but rests on its own proper grounds, the peculiar circumstance of the Jews being preserved as a distinct people, naturally leading to the expectation of something peculiar in their outward national history hereafter; and the passages of Scripture which speak of their restoration being so numerous and express, and including the restoration of Israel, as well as Judah, so that they must look farther than the restoration from Babylon. "Thus saith the Lord God," by Ezekiel, after the emblem of joining the two sticks into one, "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all;" "and David my servant shall be king over them." This is but one specimen of many passages which might be quoted.\* But, whatever may be thought as to this, there can be no doubt that the conversion of the Jews, in the general triumph of Christianity, will greatly ameliorate even their outward condition. As to their being brought at last to receive Jesus as their Messiah, and to share abundantly in the blessings of gospel salvation, the apostle Paul is most explicit, in writing to the Romans: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."†

We shall now conclude with some *reflections* on this most extraordinary prophecy and history.

1. *What a warning is there here to nations and individuals, as to the awful consequences of sin, especially of the*

\* See Ezek. xxvi. 16 to the end; xxxvii. 16 to the end; xxxix. 23 to the end; Amos ix. 11, &c.

† Rom. xi.

*sin of rejecting Christ!* The modern Jews often express their wonder why their city and temple met with such an overthrow, and why their nation has been so long and so grievously oppressed, as they have never been guilty of idolatry since the Babylonish captivity. But the reason is to be seen with abundant clearness, in their crucifixion and rejection of the Messiah. Even Moses, in whom they trust, witnesses strongly against them. They did not hearken unto the Prophet like unto him whom the Lord raised up; and, therefore, he is requiring it of them. When Pilate "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it: then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." The guilt of it has pressed heavily on them ever since. And yet, it is very instructive to remember that it is not so much the guilt of shedding that precious blood, as the guilt of resisting its application to themselves, the guilt of rejecting the atonement, the guilt of persevering unbelief, which has borne them down, and is still bearing them down. Dreadful as the crime of crucifying the Lord of glory unquestionably was, it was not unpardonable. "Father, forgive them," prayed Jesus, "for they know not what they do;" and he directed "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." It was their general rejection of the offered salvation themselves, and their continued opposition to the gospel in every way, that sealed the sentence of their condemnation. In the words of Paul to the Thessalonians: "The Jews both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." So, in other cases, national crimes, and especially national rejection of the gospel, may be expected to bring on national judgments. Nations, as such, have no existence hereafter, and therefore, if they are to be punished, as such, at all, they must be punished in this world. And have not we reason to be afraid, when we think of the sins with which our nation is chargeable? "Let us not be high-minded, but fear; for, if God spared not the natural branches, let us take heed lest he also spare not us." May the Lord enable us to repent, and turn from our transgressions, that iniquity prove not our ruin.

What a warning is there here, also, to sinners individually! "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." If we betake ourselves to God's mercy through Christ, we escape; if not, we perish. The "days of vengeance" may be delayed, but they will come at last. Let every exposed sinner, then, flee without delay. If the Jews were called on to haste away from the Roman army, and if wise men flee from impending temporal calamity, how much more ought we to flee from the wrath to come! Flee, sinners, for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel. Return not back. Look not back. Remember Lot's wife. Remember the besieged Jews. Up, and get out of this state. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Let those of you who are in safety abide by your covert. Let not the avenger find you without the bounds of the city of refuge. There, nothing can hurt you; "not an hair of your head shall perish."

2. *What an evidence, in the fulfilment of this prophecy, have we of the truth of Christianity!* These events were foretold, more briefly and darkly, by Daniel, about six hundred years, and very fully and plainly, by Jesus Christ, about forty years, before their accomplishment. Our Lord's prophecy is recorded by three of the evangelists, all of whom died before the destruction of Jerusalem. It is worthy of notice that John, who was the only one of the evangelists who survived that event, is the only one of them who does not give the prophecy—a circumstance which seems to have been providentially ordered, lest infidels should object that, under pretence of recording a prophecy, he had taken undue advantage of events which had already taken place. The circumstances of the prediction, be it remembered, are not general or few, but very minute and numerous; which precludes the supposition of its being merely a happy conjecture. Many of them were, humanly speaking, very improbable. The Romans and the Jews were now at peace with each other. Even though a war should arise, it was improbable that its termination would be so utterly ruinous. The fulfilment of the prediction, and the history which gives us the most satisfactory account of that fulfilment, were secured only by a series of most extraordinary providences. As for Josephus, in the providence of God, his life was repeatedly preserved in a most singular way;—he



was qualified beyond every other man, for the task of Jewish historian, being himself a Jew, and yet being a learned man, and patronised by the Romans; he was along with the Roman army during the siege of Jerusalem; he either saw the occurrences with his own eyes, or had the best means of information on the spot, and at the time; he wrote the history impartially and fully; and that history furnishes the best commentary on the prophecy, the evidence of the truth of the prophecy, and, consequently, of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, being, if not more valid in itself, at least placed more completely beyond suspicion, by the consideration that Josephus, not being a Christian himself, had no intention of supporting Christianity by what he recorded.

As for Titus, who commanded the Romans, he too had his life wonderfully preserved, when he was suddenly surrounded by Jews, in taking a view of the city at an early period of the siege; on which Josephus remarks: "Hence we may principally learn, that both the success of wars, and the danger that kings are in, are under the providence of God." He was, doubtless, preserved to execute the just judgments of God on the unbelieving and rebellious people. And yet, it is well worthy of remark, that he was a very unlikely person to be the instrument of inflictions so very severe, for he was naturally of a mild and clement disposition, and especially so when compared with most of the other Cæsars. Suetonius, in writing his life, calls him "The darling and delight of mankind," and says, "He was by nature most benevolent." According to the same Latin historian, Titus said, "That nobody ought to go away sad from an interview with an emperor. And once remembering at supper that he had done nothing for any one that day, he uttered the memorable and justly praised saying, Friends, I have lost a day." After a certain time, "he was neither directly nor indirectly concerned in the death of any man whatever, though provocation was sometimes given to him; and he swore that he would rather perish himself, than destroy any man." Surely, it was very remarkable that a man like this should have been the chief instrument in inflicting "tribulation such as was not since the world began, no, nor ever shall be." Surely, he was "the rod of God's anger." The hand of God was in this, bending the mind of man, to the fulfilment of the purposes of his own righteous indignation.

How striking the fulfilment of the prophecy in the details of the siege, the famine, the slaughter, the captivity, the dis-

persion, and the continued oppression of the unhappy nation! How astonishing their preservation for nearly eighteen hundred years, as a distinct people, though scattered up and down the world, and having no country or government of their own! There is no such case in the history of the world. It is to be accounted for only on the supposition of the constant interposition of Providence, and of the truth of the Holy Scriptures. In this we especially see the fulfilment of the prophecy delivered through Jeremiah:\* "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee." Many other things may be called in question, but this seems unquestionable. When we see a Jew, we see a standing miracle, we see an evidence of the correctness of the great scriptural outline of the history of the Jews—an evidence of their call and rejection—an evidence of the truth of revelation. So wonderfully do all things combine to shut us up to this conclusion, that the very rejection of the gospel by the main body of the Jews hitherto is a proof of its truth, inasmuch as this is foretold by Christ and his apostles. The fulfilment of this prophecy, and the present state of their nation, ought also to convince the Jews themselves of the truth of Christianity. Messiah was to come while the second temple was standing, but it is long since it was no more; he was to come before the daily sacrifice was taken away, but it has long ago ceased. He is, therefore, already come, or the prophecies have been falsified. But, all things which the prophecies led to expect of the Messiah meet in Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Jesus of Nazareth is he, and it is in vain for them to look for another.

3. *How affecting is it to contemplate that extraordinary people, the Jews, in their still continuing state of degradation, yet unconquerable love to their own land!* Amid all his sins, and degradations, and wretchedness (and these are very great), the modern Jew is still a most interesting being. Like his forefathers at Babylon, he weeps when he remembers Zion; he hangs his harp upon the willows, saying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And, if it be melancholy and amazing to see the Jew anywhere, it must be doubly so to see him in

\* Jer. xxx 11.

the land of Judea itself. "Cast your eyes," says one who has visited the Jews in their own land,\* "cast your eyes between the temple and Mount Zion; behold another petty tribe, cut off from the rest of the inhabitants of this city. The particular objects of every species of degradation, these people bow their heads without murmuring; they endure every kind of insult without demanding justice; they sink beneath repeated blows without sighing; if their head be required, they present it to the scimitar. On the death of any member of their proscribed community, his companion goes at night, and inters him by stealth in the valley of Jehoshaphat, in the shadow of (the hill where once stood) Solomon's temple. Seventeen times have they witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, yet nothing can discourage them, nothing can prevent them from turning their faces towards Zion. To see the Jews scattered over the whole world, according to the Word of God, must doubtless excite surprise. But, to be struck with supernatural astonishment, you must view them at Jerusalem; you must behold these rightful masters of Judea living as slaves and strangers in their own country; you must behold them expecting, under all oppressions, a King who is to deliver them. Crushed by the cross that condemns them, skulking near the temple, of which not one stone is left upon another, they continue in their deplorable infatuation." In the words of another traveller,† "The sight of a poor Jew in Jerusalem has in it something peculiarly affecting. The heart of this wonderful people, in whatever clime they roam, still turns to it as the city of their promised rest. They take pleasure in her ruins, and would lick the very dust for her sake. Jerusalem is the centre around which the exiled sons of Judah build, in airy dreams, the mansions of their future greatness. In whatever part of the world he may live, the heart's desire of a Jew, when gathered to his fathers, is to be buried in Jerusalem. Thither they return from Spain and Portugal, from Egypt and Barbary, and other countries among which they have been scattered; and when, after all their longings and all their struggles up the steep of life, we see them poor, and blind, and naked, in the streets of their once happy Zion, he must have a cold heart that can remain untouched by their sufferings, without uttering a prayer that the light of a reconciled countenance would

\* Chateaubriand.

† Dr Richardson.

shine on the darkness of Judah, and the day-star of Bethlehem arise in their hearts."

Lastly, *How should the prospect of the conversion and restoration of the Jews delight the hearts of Christians, and animate them to active and prayerful exertions for their spiritual good!* The operations for their conversion are, in many respects, most important, and deserving of our support. They are so, when we view the Jews merely in the light of *fellow-creatures and fellow-sinners*. Is it true that there exists a race of men who are in sin, and yet avowedly rejecting the only way of safety? then the simple knowledge of that fact, though no other argument could be urged, ought to be enough to stir us up to seek their salvation. But this is far from being all. The object is highly important in respect of the great *number* who are here the objects of our benevolence. Not that they would be unworthy of our attention, if their number were small. Suppose there were only one unbelieving Jew on the face of the earth, ought the hearts of Christians to be indifferent to that one case? rather, should not, and would not, our sympathies, and our anxieties, and our prayers, and our endeavours, centre, with amazing intensity, on that singular individuality of sin and helplessness? But what is the real state of this case? The number of Jews is probably underrated, if taken at six millions. We behold, then, before the eye of our mind, a mighty nation calling for our aid. The object, moreover, is highly important, in consequence of the very *dreadful state* in which the Jews are lying. Nothing could be more erroneous than to suppose that they are as good as the Old Testament can make them. As they have not chosen the Lord's ways, he has left them to their own. Without any breach of truth or charity, it may be said that superstition, impiety, and immorality, prevail among the great body of them, to a lamentable extent. And, what is especially alarming, they have no atonement to look to for pardon, either figurative or real; and they deride the doctrine of regeneration. Surely, they stand as much in need of conversion as Mohammedans or heathens. Their case becomes peculiarly interesting, too, when we *contrast* their now abject and wretched condition with their ancient privileges and glory. If the sight of the illustrious unfortunate awaken our sensibilities, nowhere does this sight present itself so vividly as in the Jews. What an honoured people, when, rescued from Egyptian bondage,

and led through the Red Sea, they marched across the Arabian desert, under the guidance and shelter of the pillar of cloud and of fire! How astonishing, when they heard the thunders of Sinai, the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of God! How happy, when brought into the land that flowed with milk and honey! How gloriously were they protected and delivered! It was dangerous in the extreme to meddle with them then. How exalted were they in the prosperity of Jerusalem, and, above all, in the glorious privileges of Zion's temple, inhabited by Zion's God! "Beautiful for situation," exclaimed they, "the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." But we have just been considering the ruin of their temple and city: and how are the people themselves fallen and degraded! Fugitives, vagabonds on the earth, they are oppressed by rulers, scorned of the people, deserted by God, a wonder to themselves, gloomy in life, and without consolation in death. And then, when we think of the debt of *gratitude* we owe them! They have been the instruments in the hand of God of almost every spiritual blessing bestowed on man. By Jews, the knowledge of the one true God was kept alive of old. By Jews, the Holy Scriptures were written and preserved. Jews were the first publishers of the gospel to a perishing world. And, above all, He is a Jew who redeemed us unto God by his blood, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let gratitude, then, prompt us to discharge some part of a debt which we shall never be able fully to repay. We owe them, also, a debt of justice, in the way of *restitution* and compensation for the many heavy injuries our own nation, as well as others, has inflicted on them.

The difficulties in the way of their conversion are, doubtless, great, but ultimate success is certain. Individual cases are occurring from time to time, and their national restoration to God is drawing on. The words of Jehovah, by Hosea, are very remarkable and encouraging: "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim;" that is, without any form of government of their own, and without the sacrifices of the law, and yet, without falling into idolatry: "Afterward," continues the same prophecy, "shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his

goodness in the latter days." Yes, fallen, despised, and obstinate, as they now are, they shall yet be great and happy, and shall rejoice to place the crown of David on the head of Him who was indeed born king of the Jews. The Jewish harp now hangs mute on the willow, for the most part; and plaintive indeed are the notes it utters, when any hand tries it; but the time is coming when it will give a far nobler sound. How differently will it speak, when handled by the Jew himself, as an accompaniment to the evangelical songs of Zion! How boldly will *he* sweep its strings, when he follows up the song of Moses with the song of the Lamb! "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! for when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall sing." The Lord grant it of his mercy; the Lord hasten it in his time! Glory be to thee, O Lord, that thou hast not cast off for ever the seed of Israel for all that they have done. How long, O Lord? Let it repent thee now. Put up thy sword into its sheath, and no longer pursue them thus. Turn away ungodliness from Jacob. O thou God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have mercy on the people that were called by thy name. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look upon Him who now sits at thy right hand, and let the wounds of his sacred body plead for his kindred.

## LECTURE OXIV.

## LUKE XXI. 25-38.

“ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26. Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. 29. And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 34. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 37. And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives. 38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.”

IN considering the 7th verse, it was observed that there was a difficulty in giving a decided and consistent interpretation of this chapter throughout, and that different views were taken of it by different expositors. I here repeat, that while some are for confining the whole chapter solely to the destruction of Jerusalem, and excluding entirely all reference to the general judgment, and while others venture to determine positively where the former subject is altogether dropped, and the latter first taken up, it seems to me the most correct method to expound the greater part of the chapter primarily and directly of Christ’s providential coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, viewing, however, that catastrophe as an emblem of his personal coming at the judgment of the great day, the description of this latter

event being interwoven, or, at least, inseparably connected with that of the former, some of the verses being applicable only to the former event, but many of them being equally applicable to both, and the latter event being more clearly pointed to as we get on towards the close of the chapter. No one scheme of interpretation has been found to give universal satisfaction; every expositor, therefore, must follow that scheme which appears most natural to himself. The five verses which we last considered, without doubt, directly refer, nay, admit of being literally applied, only to the overthrow of Jerusalem, a calamity which we have already described somewhat fully, and to which we shall not again particularly recur.

Several eminent expositors hold that the prophecy concerning Jerusalem stops at the end of the 24th verse, and that from the 25th verse, the day of judgment alone is spoken of. But though much of what is said in that part of the chapter which is now before us does most naturally apply to the day of judgment, the following considerations are deemed by many conclusive in favour of the opinion that our Lord is ultimately referring to the end of the world, according to the commonly received meaning of that phrase, but still alluding, in the first instance, to the destruction of Jerusalem. In the *first* place, the language and imagery employed in some of these verses are of the same character with those employed in some of the preceding, as will appear, for example, on a comparison of the 25th verse with the 11th; and this circumstance is, at least, consistent with the opinion that the subject is still the same. In thus returning to certain points which he had noticed before, in order to enlarge on them, our Lord would only be doing what is quite usual in other prophecies. *Secondly*, In that part of the prophecy as given by Matthew,\* which seems to correspond most exactly with the two first verses of the subject of this lecture, we read: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Now, "as it would be very harsh to suppose all the sufferings of the Jewish nation in all ages to be called the tribulation of those days, so it would, on the other hand, be equally so to say that the general judgment, which probably will not commence till at

\* Matt. xxiv. 29.



least a thousand years after their restoration, will happen immediately after their sufferings; nor is there any instance in which the word 'immediately,'\* is used in so strange a latitude."† And, *Thirdly*, Without anticipating the exposition of the words in the 32d verse, "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled," we may surely say they almost necessarily suggest the idea of something that was to happen ere long—the commencement, at least, of a series of events, before the death of some who were alive when the prophecy was uttered. Let us proceed, then, to consider the passage now before us on this principle, the principle of a primary reference to the overthrow of the Jewish state, and of a secondary, and now very clear reference, to the end of the world.

The 25th and 26th verses correspond to the verse just read from Matthew. "*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear,‡ and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*" Perhaps there may be here some reference to the "fearful sights and great signs" which we formerly noticed. That great distress and perplexity oppressed the land of Judea and the neighbouring countries because of the Roman war, it is altogether needless to show, after what has been formerly said. As to "the sea and the waves roaring," Josephus mentions dreadful, literal storms that took place about that time, in which the sea broke in upon the land with frightful inundations. Yet these expressions seem chiefly figurative; for, it is to be observed, that the prophets were accustomed to describe nations and rulers under the poetical figure of the heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, and to speak of heavy national calamities, revolutions, and the overthrow of states, under the comparison of the heavenly bodies being darkened, or shaken, and falling out of their place. For example,

\* *Εὐθύς.*

† Doddridge.

‡ Ἀποψυχουσιν ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ φόβου, &c., men fainting away, expiring, or ready to die, through fear.

"Trepidant, trepidant pectora magno  
Percula metu, ne fatali  
Cuncta ruina quassata labent,  
Iterumque deos hominesque premat  
Deforme chaos."——

*Senec. Thyest.*

Isaiah,\* in denouncing, from God, the destruction of Babylon: "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate;" and, after this literal, he gives the following figurative description of the very same event: "For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."—"Therefore, I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger." So also, the Lord, by Ezekiel,† thus threatens Egypt: "When I shall put thee out," or extinguish thee, "I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God." Daniel, too,‡ prophesying of the success of the "little horn," or Antiochus Epiphanes, against "the pleasant land," or Judea, says, "It waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." And still more exactly in point are these words in Joel,§ which plainly refer to the latter days, and, probably, both to the overthrow of Jerusalem and the end of the world: "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." The general meaning, then, of these figures is sufficiently plain. With regard to the Jews, Christ thus foretold that their civil and ecclesiastical state should perish, and the sun, moon, and stars, the light of their glory and happiness, should be darkened. In the apprehension of such calamity, many must have been ready to die for fear.

But the typical nature of these particular events, and the form which the prediction is now beginning more distinctly, to assume, seem to forbid us thus to limit the interpretation, and appear calculated to lead forward our thoughts to that still more interesting period, the end of the world, and to

\* Isa. xiii. 10.

† Ezek. xxxii. 7.

‡ Dan. viii. 10.

§ Whether it bear directly on the illustration of this language or not, it is worthy of remark, that the meteors called "falling stars," eclipses, and other striking appearances in the sky, were thought, by the common people, to be omens of calamity. See Virg. Georg. i. 365, and 462. Statius, lib. x., near the beginning.

intimate that, whatever quietness and prosperity may prevail for a time, it will be introduced by heavy calamities and great revolutions among the nations, of the exact nature of which, however, we have no particular information. This part of the prophecy seems also to point to those tremendous convulsions of nature which were to take place, only figuratively, in the overthrow of the Jews and other nations, but which will take place literally at the time of the general judgment. On this subject, the apostle Peter\* thus writes: "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." In the day of the Lord, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."—"All these things shall be dissolved." In the vision of the apostle John, too, after the description of the very prosperous state of religion on earth for a thousand years, and of the severe contest to follow, it is added, as part of the account of the events of the general resurrection and judgment, "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."†

"*And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.*" Primarily, this refers to our Lord's providential coming to the destruction of Jerusalem. Though not personally there, he was seen in the dreadful visitation which he directed. As to the phraseology here employed, it is to be remembered that God's providential interposition in the way of striking judgments, is frequently represented in Scripture as his "coming," and his coming "in the clouds." "Behold," saith Isaiah,‡ "the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt:" and again, "Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." So also, in the 50th Psalm, which may be considered as referring both to the national calamities of the Jews, and to the last day, it is said, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He

\* 2 Pet. iii. 7.

† Rev. xx. 11.

‡ Isa. xix. 1, xxvi. 21; see also 2 Sam. xxii. 8-12; Ps. xviii. 9-12; Nahum i. 3-6.

shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."

But the general, and, I think, just opinion is, that here, at least, the language, while it includes the providential coming of Christ at the overthrow of the Jewish nation, rises far above it, and points to his literal, personal, visible coming—his second coming at the last day. While the disciples beheld Jesus ascending, and "a cloud received him out of their sight," the two angels said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven;"\* and with their words correspond those of John, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen."

*"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."* In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem—whereas the hearts of the obstinate Jews, as was already stated, would fail them for fear of the coming calamities, our Lord here exhorted his disciples not to be cast down, but to be of good cheer, and to confide in God's providence; and to this temper of mind he exhorts them by the encouraging assurance that at the very time when ruin would be coming on the unbelieving people, *their* redemption, that is, their temporal deliverance, would be approaching. We have already noticed that the Christians all escaped with their lives at that awful time; and we may here add, that very overthrow of the Jewish power, freed them from persecution, and brought them comparative liberty for a season, especially in Judea. Hence, about that time, the gospel was very extensively promulgated, and the words of our Lord, in the parallel passage of Matthew, received all the fulfilment then intended—"He (the Son of man) shall send his angels," that is, his messengers, or ministers, "with a great sound of a trumpet," that is, with the preaching of the gospel, "and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

But all this also will receive a more full, and a far more august accomplishment in the events of the judgment of the great day. While the signal of its approach will fill the ungodly with dismay, it will inspire the breasts of the

\* Acts i. 11; Rev. i. 7.

faithful with the most delightful anticipations. The very events which will prepare for the final perdition of the ungodly, will introduce that redemption which consists in the resurrection and final and complete salvation of believers, who are represented as "groaning within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body," and as "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."\* And as the Redeemer, by human messengers, effected the diffusion of the gospel to a very great extent, at the early period primarily referred to, he will, by human messengers also, effect its universal triumph, and gather all nations into his Church before the end of time. But a higher order of messengers than men will be employed at the great day itself. The ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, are especially active for their good at the most trying seasons. When the beggar died, "he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." "The harvest is the end of the world," said Jesus, "and the reapers are the angels. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend:" "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."†

Having declined to state the exact time, either of the overthrow of Jerusalem, or of the end of the world, and having, nevertheless, mentioned some signs of both, our Lord next proceeds to illustrate the unfailing nature of these signs, by a familiar comparison. "*And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*" The plain meaning of this parable is, that the budding of trees is not a more infallible sign of the approach of summer, than the signs which Jesus mentioned would prove of the approach, first, of the ruin of the Jewish kingdom, as preparatory to the reign of God in the extensive prevalence of the gospel on earth, and, secondly, of the winding up of the whole scheme in the perfect establishment of the kingdom of God in heaven. So true have we ascertained the signs to have proved in the former case, that no room is left to doubt of their proving equally true

\* Rom. viii. 23; Eph. i. 13.

† Matt. xiii. 39.

in the latter. Let what has been already fulfilled, then, of this prophecy, confirm our faith in what of it remains to be fulfilled in the judgment to come.

Verse 32: "*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.*" We have already alluded to this verse as naturally suggesting the idea of the accomplishment of the events referred to, while some of the people then existing should be still alive. The period which intervened between the uttering of the prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem being only about forty years, we may be sure that, in the ordinary course of things, some, nay, many, who were living at the former, must have been alive at the latter. It is generally agreed that the apostle John was one of these, and that his surviving the catastrophe was hinted at in the words which our Lord spoke to Peter concerning him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"\* Everything that related to that period was accomplished within the time, and everything that, from its very nature, required ages, or centuries, was fulfilled, is fulfilling, or will be fulfilled in its season.

With regard to the opinion of those who think that instead of "this generation,"† the rendering should be, "this nation," or people, and that thus the sentence should be understood as intimating that the Jewish nation should not be lost, but be preserved as a distinct people through all generations, or ages, till the whole of this prophecy be fulfilled; that interpretation, no doubt, would refer to a very interesting fact, and have the advantage of being very comprehensive: but our own is the true interpretation of the word, and we have, according to the common idea, the whole of what our Lord foretold, if not directly described, yet emblematically represented. This view of this part of the passage seems to be borne out by the very similar passage in the 16th chapter of Matthew. In the 27th verse of that chapter, Jesus says, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works;" which words suggest the idea of his coming at the day of judgment: and then, as a proof of the certainty of that event,

\* John xxi. 22. "There were some Rabbins alive at the time when Christ spoke these things, that lived till the city was destroyed, viz., Rab. Simeon, who perished with the city—R. Jochanan Ben Zaccai, who outlived it—R. Zadoch, R. Ismael, and others."—*Lightfoot* on Matt. xxiv. 34.

† Γενεα, not γένος.

he tells his disciples, in the next verse, that some of them should live to see an awful emblem of it: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

"*Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.*" This applies, not only to our Lord's words on this particular occasion, but to all the words he ever spoke, and to all the declarations of Scripture. They will all continue stable and sure, not only as long as the present visible frame of things lasts, but when it has passed away, even for ever. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished,"\* saith the Lord. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever."—"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Let this truth be well pondered by all. "The Lord's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."—"He is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent." Let not those who are neglecting the things which belong to their peace flatter themselves that they may, by some possibility, escape his threatened judgments; but let them credit his testimony, and, by turning to him with all their heart, wisely fly from the impending danger. On the other hand, let none of those who "love the Lord" be discouraged, as if, by any means, his purposes of grace towards them could change, or his promise of kindness be frustrated. This earth shall vanish; but their Redeemer is unchangeable. These heavens shall perish; but he remaineth. They all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shall he fold them up, and they shall be changed; but he is the same, and his years shall not fail. Let them continue to trust in him, and they shall have every reason to say, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken:" "all came to pass."

"*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*" This is to be considered, primarily, as a warning to the disciples to be careful not to be taken off their

\* Isa. li. 6; 1 Pet. i. 25; Matt. v. 18.

guard when the Romans should invest Jerusalem, and as implying a promise of safety if they should be found in the way of duty and sobriety. The sins specified would unfit those who indulged in them for meeting that trial, and render them an easy prey to the enemy. In fact, the state of the unbelieving Jews was such, that the calamity in question came on them as a snare or net falls suddenly on an unwary bird, and inextricably entangles it. The Wise man\* employs similar language, when he says, "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." But we have also to regard this warning as applicable to the still more important event of our meeting the Lord at death and the judgment. In this view, we are all cautioned against certain things which "overcharge,"† or render heavy, burden, and weigh down the soul, so as to unfit it for such a meeting. "Surfeiting," if by that, as distinguished from excessive drinking, we understand gluttony, or excess in eating, is a very stupifying propensity, and betokens a carnal mind. "Go to now," says the apostle James, "weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you."—"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." Still more, however, is drunkenness deadening and ruinous to the immortal soul. How very dreadful, especially, the thought of the not unfrequent case of persons being cut off in a state of intoxication, and sent to become sober in the place where there is not a drop of water to cool their tongue! As certainly lost, however, are they who die sober, but who die with the sin of intemperance unforgiven, or the propensity to be guilty of it unsubdued. Nor ought we to be inattentive to the caution here given against "the cares of this life;" for there are many who are not chargeable with intemperance, nor, indeed, with any flagrant inmorality, but who are so engrossed with the affairs of time, as to neglect those of eternity. This is the great snare of men of business, and of many plodding people in domestic life. Not a few, even of those who frequent the house of God with the professed desire of spiritual

\* Eccles. ix. 12.

† Βαρυνθῶσι. Βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ, heavy with sleep, Luke ix. 32. Xenophon says that Lycurgus directed men to take food only to an extent by which they might not be rendered heavy, or dull, by repletion, ὥστε ἀληθινῆς μετῴτης βαρυνεσθαι.



benefit, "when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Let us beware of the predominance of this spirit of worldliness, as we would avoid perishing with the world. Let us beware of even the partial prevalence of this spirit, lest we bring on ourselves much uneasiness and loss, and, if not shut out, do not obtain an "abundant entrance" into the kingdom of heaven.

That they might not only escape with life, but stand, or appear, with acceptance, at their Lord's coming, he not only cautioned his disciples, as we have just heard, but gave them positive directions as to the spirit and habits which they ought to cultivate. "*Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*" Not less important for us, in reference to our appearing before the Son of man in judgment, is the duty of *watchfulness*: *ss* Let us watch against the world and the devil. Let us watch over ourselves—over our own state, temper, and habits. Let us watch against every sin, and do every duty. Let us study to be not only habitually safe, but actually ready. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching."\* Equally necessary is it for us to *pray*. Personal vigilance, diligence, and courage, though positively required, cannot, of themselves, secure our safety. God only can render these means effectual; and to him it behoves us to look for that purpose. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Let us *pray always*. Let us engage in the actual exercise of prayer very often, even on all suitable occasions; and let us habitually cultivate a praying frame of mind.† Let us pray always, and watch always; for the word "always" seems to be intended to apply to both. These two duties should continually go together. We are neither to be satisfied with watchfulness without prayer, nor with prayer without watchfulness, but are to keep them both in combined operation. "Nevertheless," says Nehemiah,‡ "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against" our enemies "day and night." Thus shall we be able to stand before the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath shall come—the day in which, to his own mas-

\* See the duty of watchfulness more fully treated of in Lecture lxviii.

† See more on importunity in prayer, in Lecture xcii.

‡ Nehemiah iv. 9.

ter, every servant shall either stand or fall,\* that is, be acquitted or condemned.

Such is the account which Luke gives of what our Lord spoke this day. The evangelist then tells us, generally, how Jesus employed the time after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem: "*And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives.*" It was stated before that "he taught daily in the temple," and that he went out of the city at night, and lodged in Bethany, which was on the Mount of Olives, towards the foot of the mount.† We see here his great diligence in the prosecution of the benevolent object of his mission, as he acted on the maxim, "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." He preached on week days, as well as on Sabbaths; and he always obtained a numerous audience; for we read, at the end of the chapter, "*And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, to hear him.*" So let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but be glad when we are invited to go up to the house of God. And, while we are bound by divine authority to frequent it on the Lord's-day, if we be at all zealous, we shall occasionally embrace other opportunities of public worship. It is true that we should not desert other duties, and that such occasional meetings should not interfere, in a hurtful degree, with the business of life; yet week-day meetings may be sometimes held, without inconvenience, and with much profit. On the circumstance of the people coming early to the temple, we may remark, that earliness may frequently be considered as a relative term, to be judged of according to the hour fixed for the commencement of the worship, and that they may be said to come early who come in good time, so as neither to neglect any part of the service themselves, nor to occasion any interruption to others. Cornelius said to Peter, "Now, therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

In the retrospect of the topics which occur in this passage, and omitting several which have been formerly enlarged on, two shall now be selected, whereon to found concluding admonitions.

*First*, Be admonished to beware of that sin so incompatible with watchfulness and preparation for the coming of

\* Rom. xiv. 4.

† Luke xix. 47; Matt. xxi. 17.

Christ—the sin of *intemperance*. “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with” “drunkenness.” The great majority of you, I am persuaded, are not chargeable with this offence; yet, let none think this warning unnecessary: it is plainly necessary for those who are already thus ensnared; and it is necessary as a safeguard to the temperate, who always ought to remember, with a wise jealousy over themselves, that many a person has at last fallen a victim to this vice, who, in his better days, would have exclaimed, “Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?”

How many and how dreadful are its evils! It is expressly contrary to the divine command, as given in this passage, and in the words, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;” and in many other places. Though there were no other reason, this ought to be enough. But God has always good reasons for what he requires and what he prohibits, whether we can perceive them or not; and here they are quite evident. Intemperance is a shameful abuse of the gifts of Providence. God “gives us all things richly to enjoy.” “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” In the 104th Psalm there is mentioned, among the things that God has made “for the service of man,” “wine that maketh glad the heart of man.” And our Lord himself plainly countenanced the moderate use of wine at entertainments, when he wrought a miracle to supply it at the marriage at Cana of Galilee. When God, then, is so indulgent and generous, how shameful is it to waste what he gives, in any way, and especially in such a way as this! Drunkenness obscures and destroys reason. But, is it a light offence voluntarily to deprive one’s self of this noble faculty, even for a time? Is it a trivial matter to put under even a temporary eclipse, that which ought ever to beam with the light of intelligence and righteousness? How dreadful, especially by a continued course of intemperance, permanently to destroy reason, and to drink away one’s senses! Intemperance brings on poverty, personal and domestic. “The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.” Some in affluent circumstances are brought down by this vice; but its impoverishing effects are most conspicuous in the middle and lower ranks of society. Where a wife and family are dependent on a man’s industry and frugality, the effect of his intem-

perance is rapidly ruinous. When a man gives way to this habit, the prosperity and happiness of his family are blasted as by a dire curse. Be it so, that, while he is swallowing down the intoxicating poison in solitary selfishness, or seated with his giddy companions at the table of riot, all sorrow is drowned, and all care fled, for the moment. Be it so that his associates flatter him with commendations of generosity, benevolence, and goodness of heart. Away with such trifling! away with such delusions and lies! No, no; it is not thus that true generosity displays itself. Where is that man's benevolence who will not deny himself those gratifications, the indulgence of which is the cause of his children, or those whom he is bound to support, being neglected and in rags? Where is the goodness of that man's heart who can leave the wife of his bosom to weep over his absence, and to pine in want and wretchedness? Away with such delusions and lies, and let the drunkard be dragged forth to the light, that he may be seen in his true colours, as devoid, not merely of Christian principles, but of the common feelings of humanity. Drunkenness is often accompanied, at the time of indulgence, with various other sins, such as indecent language, profane swearing, and mockery of things sacred; and it prepares men for the commission of the enormous crimes of robbery, adultery, and murder. Drunkenness impairs the bodily health, wilfully to injure which is a heinous crime. Drunkenness shortens the lives of many whom it does not instantly kill. Drunkenness, as this passage reminds us, frequently occasions sudden death; and, in the most dreadful sense of the words, causes the day of retribution to come upon men unawares. When this is the result, the threatening in Jeremiah\* is literally fulfilled: "In their heat, I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord." Would to God that such a catastrophe were always effectual with the other deluded beings who witness it! When one is smitten, let the others turn and live. Thus, when the snare of the fowler falls down on one unwary bird, the rest of the flock take wing and fly heavenward. But, what completes the climax of these horrid evils, is this, drunkenness ruins the soul to all eternity. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery," "envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before, as I

\* Jer. li. 39.

have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." O direful end! O sad conclusion to what blinded men are pleased to call a merry life! Tremble, ye infatuated mortals, and start back from the tremendous gulf that lies right before you. Tremble at the thought of this sin, you, too, who are yet free from it. Note, and be on your guard against the most frequent occasions of it, and temptations to it, such as great disappointments in life, the sudden accession of prosperity, a nervous temperament, entertaining company at home, visiting in the houses of others, unnecessarily frequenting inns, the being exposed to cold, contagious society, and the like. Keep decidedly within the bounds of moderation, go not by any means to the utmost length you think you may with safety, lest you pass the limit, and be ensnared, and taken, and fall. And with all your good resolutions, remember your own weakness, and look to God for grace to keep you steady.

*Lastly.* Be admonished, all of you, to *make positive preparation for meeting the Lord, and to think often of that all-important hour.* The day of judgment, strictly speaking, is, probably, at what may be called a considerable distance; but you must be aware that there is another event which will be equally decisive of your fate, an event which cannot be far off, and which may be God only knows how near. The messenger of death may already have received his commission to cut you off. Its execution will dismiss your souls—amazing alternative!—to be immediately received by the Lord Jesus to everlasting happiness, or to be consigned in hopelessness to the company of "the spirits in prison;" and the rest in the grave, as to your bodies, will only be like the slumber of a night, when the trump of God shall awaken you to the morning of the resurrection. Ought you not to be ready for that call, at whatever time it may be given? In order to this, it is well if you are sober; but it is not enough. You must be living, not only "soberly," but "righteously and godly in the world;" you must "add

to temperance," "godliness." You must have that preparation which consists in being in a safe state, that is, in a state of regeneration and justification, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, and faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must receive the Saviour now, if you wish him to receive you then. You must know what it is to "love his appearing," if you are to share in his blessedness. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and, unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The certainty of his second coming should completely convince you of the necessity of that habitual preparation which consists in being in a state of grace; and the uncertainty of its exact time should teach you to be always on your guard, and add force to the exhortation, "Be ye also ready." To all this, it will be an excellent help, under God, to think often of death and judgment. It is not true that this would mar the happiness of your life. If you keep death and judgment in mind, it will check the false mirth of thoughtless impiety, but it will kindle up in your souls something of that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory; it will prompt you to walk here as heirs of immortality, and, amid the wreck of worlds, it will enable you to lift your heads with confidence, because your redemption draweth nigh. "Now the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

## LECTURE CXV.

## LUKE XXII. 1-18.

“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover. 2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. 3. Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. 5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude. 7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.”

LUKE commences this chapter with these words: “*Now, the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover;*” but in the parallel passage of Matthew (xxvi. 1), we find the time, which is here given only in a general way, noted more exactly by our Lord himself: “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”\* Of the original institution of the passover, as well as its observance by Christ and his apostles on this occasion, it will be better to speak when we come to the latter part of the passage under consideration. We shall only remark

\* See also Mark xiv. 1.

here, that what Jesus had repeatedly alluded to before, he now speaks out with the utmost plainness, namely, that he was to be betrayed and crucified, and that, too, now almost immediately. His thus making his disciples fully aware of what was coming, must have had considerable effect, notwithstanding all their weakness, in preventing them from being altogether discouraged, and from renouncing his name, or rashly hurrying into any improper measures, when he was actually put to death.

*"And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him: for they feared the people;"* or, as in Matthew, "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people." The rulers had been long desirous to put Jesus to death; and as public executions generally took place at one of the three great feasts, some of them thought that this would be a proper time for carrying into effect their criminal design against him. They were afraid, however, of the people, many of whom counted him a true prophet; and, therefore, they saw the necessity of proceeding with much caution. Some of them, indeed, gave it as their opinion that no attempt against him should be made "on the feast-day," or rather (as there is no word in the original for "day"), "during the festival;" which may mean either the first day, or the whole eight days of the feast. These persons were for waiting till the feast was over, lest the crowd of people then assembled should make an insurrection, to oppose the attempt on Christ's life, or to avenge his death. Others, however, pushed on the measure with more keenness, to whom the rest yielded on finding, in the treachery of Judas, a more inviting opportunity than they expected.

*"Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests, and captains, how he might betray him unto them."* This Judas, as distinguished from the other Judas, or Jude, had the additional name of "Iscariot," or the man of Carioth, which was a small town beyond Jordan.\* It was a high aggravation of his crime that he was one of the apostles, for thus he was guilty of

\* See Lecture on Luke vi. 16.



base treachery to the Master who had treated him with confidence and kindness. Herein were fulfilled, in antitype, the words of the Psalmist:\* “Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Our Lord himself, quoting these words of the Psalm,† in this application, adds, “Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.” We are told that “Satan entered into Judas.” In illustration of this, the words of the evangelist John‡ (in his account of what is justly, I think, considered by many to have been a supper in Bethany before the passover) should be noticed: “And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.”—“And after the sop, Satan entered into him.” Satan entered into Judas, chiefly by the temptation of avarice, to which he was very accessible, for we are assured that he was unfaithful to his trust as treasurer for the common stock of our Lord and his attendants. “He had the bag, and bare what was put therein;” but “he was a thief.”§ He was habitually covetous; and now his covetousness urges him on to a most shocking crime. He went, of his own accord, and conversed with “the chief priests;” by whom we are here, as in a preceding verse, to understand either the heads of the different sects of priests, or Annas and Caiaphas, whose anomalous situation was explained when we considered the words in the 2d verse of the 3d chapter: “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.” He conversed also with “the captains;” that is, probably, those who had the command of the watches of the temple.|| He consulted with these chief men how he might, most conveniently and safely, deliver Christ up to them. And being a covetous wretch, he resolved to obtain some pecuniary advantage by his treachery. According to Matthew, he expressly put the question to the chief priests, “What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” It is very deserving of remark, that he did not prove, nor even allege, any crime against Jesus; though, had there been any ground of accusation, he could not have been ignorant of it, and, we may be sure, he would not have neglected to avail himself of it as an excuse for his

\* Ps. xli. 9.

† John xiii. 18, 19.

‡ John xiii. 2, 27.

§ John xii. 6.

|| See Josephus, Wars, VI., v. 3. Bishop Pearce, Dr A. Clarke, and especially Lightfoot’s *Horæ, in locum*. The captain of the temple (Acts iv. 1) seems to have been over the whole captains and watches.

treachery. What stronger evidence can there be desired in support of the innocence and excellence of Jesus? No colourable pretext does the traitor show: his own words evince that he was led on solely by the inordinate love of money. And dreadful are the crimes to which that passion instigates many who cherish it.\* Without any view to the atrocious crimes of murder and robbery, is not this virtually the sinful question of many a man, "What will ye give me?" or, "What shall I gain by this?" and if he can but secure some worldly gain, he is ready to sacrifice his fidelity to Christ, his conscience, and his hope of heaven. But what folly! "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The enemies of Jesus were delighted to hear a proposal so well adapted to accomplish their diabolical purpose, and immediately entered into an agreement with Judas: "*And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude,*" or, without tumult. The exact sum of money agreed on is specified in Matthew, namely, "thirty pieces of silver." The pieces of money here meant, appear to have been what were called *staters*, which were of the same value with shekels; and the shekel, being estimated to have been worth from two shillings and sixpence to three shillings of our money, the sum for which Jesus was sold into the hands of his murderers was from £3, 15s. to £4, 10s.† Two remarkable circumstances are here interwoven—the amazing humiliation of the Son of God, and the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning him. This was the exact price appointed, by the law of Moses, to be paid for a slave, in the following case: "If the ox shall push a man-servant, or a maid-servant," a male or a female slave, so that death ensue, the owner of the ox "shall give unto the master" of the slave "thirty shekels of silver."‡ This may be considered as one striking illustration of the way in which he humbled himself, who, "being in the form of God," "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant," or (as the word should perhaps be rendered), slave. Thus, too, was

\* "Quid non mortalia pectora cogis  
Auri sacra fames?"—VIRG. *Æn.* iii. 56.

† Prideaux and others.

‡ Exod. xxi. 32.

fulfilled, in antitype, one part of the prophecy in Zechariah (xi. 12, 13): "And I said unto them, If ye think good give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them! And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." The other part of the prophecy was fulfilled in a subsequent event in the history of Judas. Surely, "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."

Before leaving this part of the passage before us, let us reflect on the view it gives of *the agency of Satan on the mind of man*. However the idea may be ridiculed by some, and little thought of by others, it is plainly and frequently taught in Scripture, and therefore demands our serious consideration. Of his ineffectual attempts, that which he made on our Saviour in the wilderness is the most remarkable. Among his successful temptations may be noticed, in addition to that on Judas, his beguiling Eve, his standing up against Israel, and provoking David to number the people, and his filling the heart of Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the land.\* We are also taught to consider his attempts, whether successful or not, as of frequent and usual, not of rare occurrence. Unrenewed men are described as "walking according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" and we are told that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" and that "our adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We cannot explain the manner of his access to the minds of men, any more than that of the Holy Spirit; neither can we certainly distinguish his suggestions from those which arise spontaneously in our breasts; but, to doubt of the reality of his agency, would be infidelity. Let us guard against every temptation, which, bearing his wicked image, may proceed directly from him. Let us remember, that, though he may tempt, he cannot compel us to sin, and therefore, that we sin if we yield to him. Let us "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil:" "above all, taking the

\* Gen. iii.; 1 Chron. xxi. 1; Acts v. 3.

shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" one. Let us "resist the devil," and he "will flee" from us. Let us resist him at first, lest, yielding to him by little and little, we fall completely into his power. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, let us beware, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." Let us, especially, resist him strongly, when he attacks us in our weak points, in our besetting sins. Let the fall of Judas put us on our guard against our invisible enemy's attempts on the side of covetousness. When Satan finds a hypocritical professor of religion, whose ruling passion is the love of gain, he finds a prepared and willing subject to work on, and it is impossible to foretell into what an abyss of guilt and misery he may plunge him.

But, while we study to be habitually aware of our danger in this respect, and, as rational beings, to put forth all our mental energies against it, let us also look to God for strength to overcome. As it is alarming to know that there is an evil agency on the one hand, so it is encouraging to be assured that there is a good and more powerful agency on the other. If Satan put bad thoughts into men's minds, the Lord puts good. "Blessed," said Ezra, "be the Lord God of our fathers, who hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem."—"Neither told I any man," said Nehemiah, "what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem."—"Thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you," writes Paul to the Corinthians. Let us, therefore, pray that God, by his Holy Spirit, would suggest to us right thoughts, inspire us with spiritual desires, and influence us to good actions. If we thus put ourselves under his guidance, and yield to his influences, we shall not only be preserved from falling before Satan's temptations, but led on progressively in the way of holiness and life.

Let us now proceed to consider the other object in this passage—that of our Lord's eating of the passover with his disciples.

How interesting to the affectionate disciple of the Lord Jesus all the features of his character! A glory gilds every passage of his eventful history. The interest, however, increases, as the narration proceeds: every action acquires a double importance, every word a double emphasis, when

we begin to be aware that his death is approaching. The time was now at hand, when a life that had been spent in the uninterrupted exercise of love to God and man was to be brought to a termination, the most awful in its nature, and the most important in its consequences. The Saviour, therefore, was careful to take such preliminary steps as were necessary to bring it to a suitable close. The types and shadows were not yet passed away. Jesus was made under the law, and he was careful to observe all its ordinances—the passover in particular. Of the original institution and observance of the passover, as described in the 12th chapter of Exodus, no attentive reader of the Scriptures can be ignorant. On the 10th day of the month Nisan, a lamb, a male without blemish, was to be fixed on by each Israelitish family, or sufficiently numerous party. The lamb was to be kept up till the 14th day of the month, when it was to be slain in the evening, or, after the sun began to decline. The flesh was to be eaten the same night, roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; they were to eat it with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand; and they were to eat it wholly. The blood was to be sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts of their houses. This was to introduce the feast of unleavened bread, which lasted seven days, beginning in the evening of the 14th, and ending in the evening of the 21st day of the month; the first and last being days of holy convocation. The Israelites slew, and ate, and sprinkled the blood of the paschal lamb, according to divine appointment. At midnight, the Lord smote all the first-born of the Egyptians, but passed over and spared the first-born of the Israelites, and immediately brought that favoured nation out of the house of bondage, with a strong hand and stretched-out arm. This ordinance was also to continue to be observed in after times, as a memorial of that wonderful deliverance, and as a type of the sacrifice of Messiah, and of deliverance from the bondage of sin.

*“Then came the day”* (Matthew says “the first day”) *of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.* It is controverted, by commentators, whether Jesus, on this occasion, observed the passover on the same evening with the rest of the nation, or on the previous evening. Very high authorities might be quoted on both sides of the question. Some think\* that our Lord now anticipated the nation by

\* Especially Grotius.

one day; and they cleave to this opinion, because it supposes Christ to have been slain at the same time with the paschal lambs of the nation, and because they think it alone harmonizes with certain passages of Scripture. Most, however, think that he did not deviate from the custom of the nation, and that the passages referred to by no means necessarily imply any such deviation. I incline to the latter opinion. It is impracticable to give, in any moderate compass, an intelligible account of all the reasonings which have been held on the question; and it seems unnecessary to make the attempt. Some things, however, may be noticed. It is universally acknowledged, then, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead very early on the first day of the week, which is now the Lord's-day, or Christian Sabbath; that he lay in the grave two nights, one whole day, and part of the two other days; and that he was crucified on what we call Friday. Now, as he ate the passover on the evening before his crucifixion, he must have ate it on what we call Thursday. The first day of unleavened bread would be from the evening of Thursday to the evening of Friday: so that the Friday might be most strictly considered as the first day. But, as their day included part of two days as we reckon, and as they counted their day of twenty-four hours, from sunset to sunset, and not, like the Greeks and Romans, and most other nations, from midnight to midnight, it is natural that this should give rise to some confusion in transferring their ideas so as to suit those of other nations; and, when this is considered, together with the fact of leavened bread being abstained from during what we should call the afternoon and evening of the Thursday of the paschal lamb, as well as afterwards, we can easily see how that day might, in popular language, though not so exactly in accordance with the words of the law of Moses, be called the first day of unleavened bread. As to the supposed satisfactory coincidence of the death of Christ with the killing of the paschal lamb—if we were not redeemed on the day the paschal sacrifice was offered, we were redeemed on the day the Israelites were delivered out of Egypt, and there is a very pleasing coincidence in that. As to the passages which are thought, by some, to be favourable to the other supposition, they are by no means decisive. For example, it has been argued, that, when it is said, in John xviii. 28, in the description of what took place on the day of our Lord's condemnation and crucifixion, that the Jews,

who led Jesus to Pilate's hall of judgment, "went not into it, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover," it is evidently implied that the passover was not yet eaten. But, when it is recollected that the word, passover signifies, not merely the eating of the paschal lamb, but the whole feast of eight days, and that oxen and other animals were slain in sacrifice, and eaten on all these days, and that there were very solemn sacrifices,\* especially on the 15th day, or the day following that of the paschal lamb, the whole difficulty vanishes. There is also brought forward on the other side, that passage in John xix. 14, where it is said that, when Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified, "it was the preparation of the passover." But here, too, we are to remember, first of all, that the passover is often put for the whole feast of eight days, inclusive of extremes. And then, we are to remember that the word "preparation," or rather, the word here rendered preparation, clearly appears, from other places, to signify the day on which the necessary preparation was made for the due observance of the Jewish Sabbath, that is, the day before the Sabbath, and that their Sabbath was from sunset of our Friday, to sunset of our Saturday. "The preparation of the passover," then, here signifies the day before the Jewish Sabbath that fell in the passover week, or during that feast: and thus the day meant is the Friday, and nothing is here said as to the time of eating the paschal supper. That this was the usual signification of the word, and that it is, in all probability, its meaning here, may be clearly seen from Luke xxiii. 54, compared with Mark xv. 42, when both the evangelists are speaking of the day on which our Lord was crucified: Luke says, "That day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on;" and Mark, "And now, when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath." Besides, if, as there is every reason to suppose, the lamb used by Jesus and his disciples was killed in the temple, and part of its blood sprinkled on the altar by the priests,† according to the general custom, it is hardly credible that, tenacious as the priests were of all the customs, they would have deviated so far from the usual time as to sacrifice that lamb the day before what must

\* The Chagigah. See Lightfoot, *in locum*. Deut. xvi., "Sacrifice the passover of the herd," as well as of the flock.

† Prospect of the Temple Service.—*Maimonides*. 2 Chron. xxxv. 14. Ainsworth's note on Exod. xii. 3 contains a good account of the later customs of the passover.

have appeared to them the proper time, or that Jesus would have asked them to do so. The conclusion, then, at which we arrive from all this is, that he ate the passover with his disciples in the same evening with the rest of the nation.\*

Having intimated that the time was come when the passover must, in the usual course, be killed, Luke goes on to say, "*And he,*" that is, Jesus, "*sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*" They seem to have spent the whole of the preceding day, as well as the two preceding nights, in Bethany; and our Lord remained there, with ten of the apostles, till the afternoon of our Thursday—two of them being directed to go to Jerusalem, in the earlier part of that day, to make preparation for their all eating of the passover together. Thus, though our Lord did not, strictly speaking, sustain the relation, he exemplified the duty of the head of a family.

The two disciples were ready to execute the commission; but they were at a loss how to proceed. "*And they said, Where wilt thou that we prepare?*" They had no suitable house, perhaps no house at all, of their own. "Of all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King."† "*And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: ‡ there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.* This may have been an inn; though it is commonly, and more probably, thought to have been a private house. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did not let out their houses for hire to the strangers who came up to worship at the great feasts, but showed them cheerful hospitality—an example worthy of imitation in cases in any respect similar. Let us remember the apostolic exhortations, "Use hospitality without grudging:" "Be not forgetful to entertain

\* See, in defence of this view, Whitby's Appendix to Mark xiv., and Lightfoot on the different evangelists: see, on the other side, Grotius.

† Henry.

‡ *Essequitur*, "instructum ad epulas, lectulis nimirum stratis," &c., *Camerarius*;—with everything ready for a company to sit down.



strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The master of the house here mentioned was either a disciple of Christ, or so far acquainted with his character as to know who was meant by "The Master," or teacher. You cannot have failed to admire the foreknowledge our Lord discovered of the minute circumstances recorded, and their exact accomplishment. In a somewhat similar way, Samuel, after anointing Saul, gave him a variety of signs to convince him that he was divinely set apart to the office of king; all of which came to pass.\* The fulfilment of these signs given by Christ must have greatly confirmed the faith of the two disciples, as it ought to confirm ours. And, is it not still very encouraging for his followers, that he knows, and providentially regulates, everything that lies before them?

Peter and John prepared everything that was necessary; particularly, the lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the wine. "*And when the hour was come,*" or, as in Matthew, "when the even was come," "*Jesus sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.*" The Jews sometimes sat at meals as we do, and sometimes reclined on couches, leaning on the left elbow. In later times, they never stood, nor even sat in our way, at the paschal supper; but they always reclined, the more effectually to signify their liberty, ease, and leisure.† The same posture was, doubtless, retained by Jesus and the apostles when they ate the Lord's supper.

"*And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" "With desire I have desired;" that is, "I have greatly desired." This reduplication of the same or a similar word, is a Hebraism for the superlative degree, or a form of expression greatly strengthening the meaning. Thus also, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or, "dying, thou shalt die;" and again, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt," or, as quoted in the Acts, "I have seen, I have seen." Our Lord had kept the passover repeatedly before, but he looked forward to this passover with peculiar desire. This may have proceeded, in part, from his anxiety to testify his regard to the ordinances of the law; for he was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law;"

\* 1 Sam. x.

† Horæ Hebr. et Talm. in Matt. xxvi. 20.

and it behoved him "to fulfil all righteousness." This desire seems, also, to have been increased by his anxiety to testify his love to his disciples: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with *you*."—"Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." His partaking of that passover probably appeared to him peculiarly important, because he was then to institute the corresponding Christian ordinance which was to take its place. And the context proves that he earnestly desired to partake of this ordinance now, because it was to be the last time he was ever to do so. He wished to do so once more before his death; and he declared that he was not to keep the passover again "until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God;" that is, until that which was typified by the passover was fulfilled in his death, by which the kingdom of God, or the gospel dispensation, was to be established in the world. This saying did not imply that he was to eat the passover after that time: it merely asserted that he was not again to eat it before. Observe here, too, the state of his mind with regard to his sufferings. He had already suffered much; but, what was past was not to be compared with what was to follow. He desired to celebrate the ordinance before he suffered, as if he had never suffered anything before. This plainly referred to his agony in the garden, and death on the cross. Some drops of sorrow he had already tasted; but now the full cup was about to be presented to him, that he might drink it off to the very dregs. All these sufferings he distinctly foresaw and foretold; and these words of his imply that he was willing, nay, very desirous, to submit to them. "The cup which my heavenly Father giveth me to drink," said he, "shall I not drink it?"—"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

"*And he took the cup,*" the cup of the passover, not the cup of the Lord's supper, "*and gave thanks,*" according to his usual custom, and, as was always done, in a solemn manner, at this feast. Let us ever acknowledge the Lord, in this way, for the gifts of his providence. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then, thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land that he hath given thee."—"Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for, it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." "*And he said, Take this and divide it among yourselves,*" that is, hand it round: "*For I say*

unto you, *I will not drink of the fruit,*" or product, "*of the vine,\* until the kingdom of God shall come:*" that is, he was not to drink wine again, till the gospel should be introduced. It is probable that this verse, and likewise the 16th, may point ultimately to the happiness which his faithful followers enjoy with him in the kingdom of God above; but it is not to be forgotten, that, though he never observed the passover again, he "did eat and drink" with his disciples "after he rose from the dead."†

Now, in conclusion, is not the ordinance of the passover, whether viewed generally, or as observed by our Lord on this occasion, full of instruction to us? There is a beautiful harmony in all the plans of Jehovah. Even where quite dissimilar means are employed, he is often pursuing the very same end. This is observable in providence, both as it operates in the natural world, and as it rules in the affairs of men. This is also very observable in the history of redemption. God spoke, of old, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to the fathers by the prophets, and in the last days by his Son; but the substance of the revelation has always been the same. There has ever been but one way of salvation—the way of mercy through faith in a Redeemer. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," though not in fact, yet in type, divine purpose, and retrospective efficacy. Making allowance for circumstantial differences, there is a striking analogy, too, between the passover sacrifice and the passover feast, on the one hand, and the atonement of Christ and the Lord's supper, on the other. Take a rapid glance at the doctrinal and practical truths involved in the Old Testament institution. Remember the previous designation of the lamb, its being without blemish, its being killed as a sacrifice, the circumstance of not a bone of it being broken, the sprinkling of its blood on the lintels and door-posts, and the amazing

\* *Γινηματος της ἀμπιλου.* The word *οἶνος*, like the English word wine, is ambiguous, as wine was made of other things besides grapes. Herodotus (lib. ii.) speaks of wine made of barley by the Egyptians, because of the want of vines in their country: *Οἶνον ἐκ κριθῶν διαχειρονται οὐ γὰρ σφι εἶσι ἐν τῇ χώρῃ ἀμπιλοι.* The same author (lib. ii.) uses the expression, *ἀμπιλινῷ παρῶν*, or, the fruit of the vine, to signify wine made of grapes; and also, in the same distinguishing sense, in book iii., the expression, *οἶνος ἀμπιλινος.* He also makes mention of wine made of palms, that is, of dates, the fruit of the palm tree, *οἶνου φοινικηίου.* The phrase, then, employed by our Lord, intimates that it was wine of grapes which was used in the passover, and in the Lord's supper.

† Acts x. 41; Luke xxiv. 30-41.

and happy temporal deliverance effected for the Israelites at that time, and you see, at once, an emblem of the appointment, the perfect holiness, the atonement, the application of the benefits of the redemption of Christ, and an emblem of the still more important deliverance of his people from the bondage of sin and Satan. And, without any improper anticipation of what rather belongs to the subject of the next Lecture, we may here notice the resemblance between the paschal supper and the Lord's supper. The lamb was to be eaten, and that wholly; so, the bread is to be eaten, and the Lord Jesus is to be received in all his offices. "By faith Moses kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood;" and, without faith the observance of the Christian ordinance would be a solemn mockery. The passover was to be a memorial of the natural deliverance: "This do," said Jesus, "in remembrance of me." The lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs; and, what exercise more becoming than that of penitence when, at the Lord's table, his people look on Him whom they have pierced? These circumstances, as well as others which might be mentioned, throw much light on the doctrine of salvation, and the sacrament of the supper.

And then, when we reflect on Christ's conduct on this particular occasion, how beautiful, edifying, and encouraging is it! Especially, how striking his words, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer!" What zeal, and love, and devotedness breathe in that sentence!—a sentence in which we are all deeply interested! Let that sentence call forth our love to him in return, and remind and encourage us to trust in those sufferings to which he was then looking forward. Should not this also lead us to entertain a similar desire for the Lord's supper, which immediately followed, and came in place of the passover? To be altogether destitute of desire for the communion would argue prevalent unbelief and carelessness. But, even those who are not destitute of true religion, are sometimes chargeable with languor in the prospect of this ordinance, which is very unbecoming. Let not those who are in a state of listlessness suppose that they will receive benefit from this institution. In such a prospect

let us rouse ourselves, and pray that our desire may be to God's sanctuary, and the remembrance of his name. If we wish for a blessing, let us look for it with longing eyes. Thus saith the Lord, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Nor should present trials, or approaching sorrows, indispose us for ordinances: they should rather increase our longing for them, as did those of our Lord, when he said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover, before I suffer." If we are afflicted by the pressure of the present, or the apprehension of the future, either as to personal or relative trouble, let us come to the ordinances, that we may obtain grace to help us in the time of need. We are here taught, also, to partake of the Christian ordinance of the supper, as in the prospect of death. If we enjoy one opportunity of that kind, we know not whether we may ever enjoy another. Let us not fail, then, when the occasion presents itself, to draw near, and to avail ourselves of all its benefits; that so, if we are no more to drink of the fruit of the vine in the Church below, we may drink it new with Christ in his Father's kingdom. Let us approach the Lord in the evangelical ordinance, for food to our souls, not knowing but that, in the strength of that meal, we may have to make our journey to the world of spirits.

## LECTURE CXVI.

LUKE XXII. 19, 20.

“ And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

To those who have read some of the excellent treatises which have been published on the Lord's supper, or who have repeatedly heard it handled in public, and are well versed in the views of it which the Word of God presents, it is not to be expected that anything quite new can now be advanced on the subject. Those, however, who are best acquainted with it may derive benefit from having their minds stirred up by way of remembrance: there may be some, too, who are by no means so well informed on the ordinance as they might have been; and it is proper to discourse occasionally on it, though it were only on account of the new generations always coming forward. Let us, then, turn our attention, at some length, to the subject; and may the Holy Spirit lead us to right views of it, and abundantly bless to us our meditations on it, whether we be thus already in full communion with the Church, or only looking forward to that privilege.

As we have not only souls but bodies, not only mental faculties but corporeal senses, the Lord has wisely and graciously adapted his mode of dealing with us to both. He addresses our rational nature directly, by proofs, arguments, doctrines, promises, threatenings, and commands; but he also makes use of material and visible emblems, or signs, which force themselves on our attention, affect our senses, assist our memory, and deepen our impressions of divine things. He calls in the aid of our eyes, ears, and hands; he appeals to our sight and hearing, and even to our taste, and our touch. He has instituted sacraments, “ wherein,

by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." This method he has seen fit to employ in every age, and under every dispensation of religion. The first covenant, or the covenant of works, had its sacramental sign, namely, the tree of life; for that tree was a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain life on condition of perfect obedience. The covenant which God made with Noah that the earth should no more be destroyed by a flood, had its sacramental sign, namely, the rainbow; and to this day we have not only the divine promise to that effect in the written Word, but a confirmation of it to our sense of sight as often as we behold his bow in the clouds. Circumcision and the passover were the appointed sacraments or signs of the covenant of grace under the Mosaic dispensation, as baptism and the Lord's supper are under the Christian. In this way, the Lord consults our weakness, making outward impressions subservient to devotion of mind. So natural and pleasing is this way of expressing and confirming things by fixed emblems and significant actions, that men of all ages and countries have used it in their transactions with each other. Various instances of this are in use with us; thus, men take infestment in lands by earth and stone; ratify contracts by affixing seals to an instrument in writing; strike bargains and show kindness by shaking hands; signify civility and respect by bowing, and give various tokens as memorials at parting. These familiar examples may give some general idea of the use of the sacraments. These two ordinances agree in being both instituted permanently by Christ, the Head of the Church, in having a sign or signs, and in signifying, confirming, and applying the blessings of salvation. They differ in their signs—the sign of the one being water, and the signs of the other bread and wine; they differ in the one being for the first admission into the visible Church, the other for subsequent nourishment; they differ in their subjects—the one being administered not only to adults who have not been baptized before, but to the infants of Church members, the other only to adult believers capable of examining themselves; and they differ in this, that baptism is to be administered only once to a person, the Lord's supper often. Baptism must be first administered, and then those who are baptized are bound, when grown up, personally to declare their adherence to Christ, by partaking of his supper, in light, and faith, and love. We

have an account of the institution of this ordinance by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and by the apostle Paul in the 11th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians; and we shall avail ourselves of what is said by all the four. In proceeding to an orderly examination of the subject, let us consider,—

I. *The circumstances of the institution and first observance of the Lord's supper.* To these circumstances it behoves us to look, both as they are all interesting and instructive in themselves, and also, as they in general furnish the directory for the proper observance of the ordinance ever after.

After what was noticed in the last lecture, it is enough, with regard, first of all, to the circumstances of *place*, to say that the ordinance was instituted and first observed in the guest-chamber or large upper room of a certain house in Jerusalem, with which the master of the house accommodated our Lord and his apostles for the occasion. The three evangelists having given an account of the observance of the passover, proceed immediately, and without any break in the narrative, to describe the institution and observance of the corresponding Christian ordinance in the same chamber. “*And he,*” Jesus, “*took bread,*” says Luke; or, as it is in Matthew,\* “*And as they were eating,*” that is, just as they were finishing the paschal supper, “*Jesus took bread.*”

But this involves another circumstance, namely, *the time* of the first observance of the ordinance—it was just after the passover supper; and there was an obvious propriety in choosing that time to introduce the New Testament ordinance, which was to take the place of the Old. The time was also very interesting in relation to Christ himself, for, according to the words of Paul,† it was “*the same night in which he was betrayed,*” which was the night before his death. Now, if the last injunction of a dear friend, uttered immediately before he leaves the world, is justly held peculiarly interesting and binding, how solemn and endearing the obligation lying on Jesus’ friends to observe this ordinance, which embodies his last, his dying command!

In the next place, *the persons present* on this occasion were the twelve disciples or apostles. “*He sat down*” to the passover, it is said in the 14th verse, “*and the twelve apostles with him,*” and, as already observed, the narration

\* Matt. xxvi. 26.

† 1 Cor. xi. 23.



goes on without a break. Hence it is to be inferred that none but disciples should partake of this ordinance. Nor would the disputed point as to whether Judas communicated, in whatever way determined, make any difference as to the opinion we should hold regarding what the character of communicants ought to be. If he did not remain till the Lord's supper was celebrated, that might fairly be considered as proving that wicked men should abstain from it; if he did remain, it was an act of base hypocrisy, not to be imitated, but to be avoided.

As to the circumstance of the *position of body* in which this ordinance was first kept, we are told that, when the hour of the paschal supper was come, Jesus "*sat down*" with the twelve; that is, adopted the reclining posture usual at that feast. Now, there is no reason to suppose that they adopted a different posture at the Lord's supper; and that the common table posture was afterwards used by the first Christians seems to follow unavoidably from the ordinance being called "the Lord's table."\* Hence, without meaning to attach much importance to the circumstance, we judge it best to adopt, at the Lord's table, that posture which, in our own country, is commonly used at meals, the ordinance being, in fact, a feast.

Let us notice, in the next place, the *signs* or elements, as they are sometimes called, which are used in this ordinance—*bread* and *wine*. These were fixed on by our Lord as representations of his body and blood, and not only were they at hand at the time, but there is a striking resemblance between them and the things which they signify. Bread, in the manner of its preparation, and as being the necessary, common, and nourishing food of man, in the literal sense, well represents the body of Him who is the food of man in the spiritual sense—the support of our souls—the bread of life. Wine, in like manner, as squeezed from the grape, and as strengthening and refreshing, is an apt emblem of the blood of Christ, as forced from his body, and as suited by the great doctrine of the atonement, with which it is inseparably connected, to revive and comfort our souls. Both bread and wine were used, as both food and drink are necessary at an entertainment, and as he wished to give a perfect representation of his sufferings, and of the fullness of his salvation. Jesus "*took bread*;" he took it, in a marked and solemn manner, to call the particular attention of his

\* 1 Cor. x. 21.

disciples, and to intimate that he had something very important in view.

Having taken the bread, "*he gave thanks,*"\* so the word also is in 1 Cor. xi. 24. In Matthew and Mark, the original word is different,† and is rendered in Matthew, "blessed it," and in Mark, simply "blessed," there being no word in the original of either of these evangelists corresponding to the word "it." These expressions seem to be very nearly of the same import, and both signify that our Lord, as we express it, said grace, that is, pronounced a short prayer before distributing the bread. We are not told what words he employed on this occasion. It is possible that he may have adopted the Jewish form of blessing, which usually was, before the meat, in these words: "Blessed be thou, our God, King of the whole world, who bringest forth bread out of the earth;" and before the wine: "Blessed be our God, the King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine."‡ Or, more probably, in his own way, he gave thanks to God, as for providential supplies, so especially, for the provision of mercy for perishing souls. With regard to the expression, "he blessed," it seems more natural to supply the word "God," than the word "it;" and the Jewish forms of saying grace, just quoted, support this idea. And yet, it is rash to affirm that there is no reasonable and scriptural sense in which the bread and wine themselves may be blessed. It is true that we must guard against the absurd and superstitious notion of any transmutation of the substance of the elements, or of any virtue being imparted to them to work like a charm on men's bodies or souls. At the same time, when it is remembered that the very ground is said to be "cursed" for the sake of man's transgression, that God promises to "bless the bread and the water" of his people, and that the apostle Paul uses the words, "The cup of blessing which we bless,"§ the expression, to bless the bread and wine, should not be condemned, though certainly it should be understood in a rational sense. Though no blessing, strictly speaking, can rest on the elements themselves, or any substances for

\* *Εὐχαριστήσας.*

† *Εὐλόγησας*: Many manuscripts, however, read *εὐχαριστήσας*. Compare Matt. xiv. 19 and John vi. 11.

‡ Buxtorf, de Cæna Domini, et De Synag. Judæorum; Whitby and others.

§ Exod. xxiii. 25; 1 Cor. x. 16; to supply *ἐν*, as some would do, is to take too great a liberty.

food or drink, yet, a blessing may accompany them to us, to render them effectual for the ends for which they are given. The elements are surely, in a certain sense, "sanctified," or set apart from a common to a sacred use, "by the word of God and prayer;" and, while we thank and bless God for what he has already done for us, and given us, we should also pray that his blessing may accompany the symbols partaken of, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Corresponding, then, to this circumstance in the first observance of the ordinance, we have a special prayer before the distribution of the elements, in which act of praise and supplication all present ought to join with all earnestness and solemnity.

The next circumstance mentioned is, that our Lord "*brake*"\* the bread. This he obviously did in a marked way, and as a symbolical act, a solemn and significant ceremony, to shadow forth the wounding, bruising, piercing, crucifying, and breaking (so to speak) of his body. Hence, this circumstance should be carefully attended to every time the ordinance is celebrated, that communicants may have every assistance to enable them to apprehend or discern the Lord's body, and to fix their thoughts in an impressive way on the fact of his sufferings. This action, as performed by Christ himself at this time, amounted to a prediction of his death, and to a declaration of his willingness to die for sinners.

And when he had broken the bread, "*he gave it unto them,*" that is, to his disciples. The distribution of the bread is an essential part of the institution. As our Lord's breaking of the bread signified, more expressly, his giving himself *for* his people, so his giving the bread signified more expressly his giving himself *to* them, his bestowing on them freely all the benefits of his purchase. Let us here practically remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the free gift of God to sinners, offered to all, and actually bestowed on those who receive him by faith; and let the language of our hearts be, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"—"How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—"This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." As Jesus handed the bread to his disciples, he said, according to the three other

\* As the Jews baked their bread more in the form of a broad cake, than of a high and thick loaf, they had no need to cut it; hence, on ordinary occasions, the phrase "breaking bread."—Acts ii. 46.

accounts, "Take, eat." And so it is to be understood they did, of course. Their taking of the bread into their hands, and eating of it, in consequence of his gift and command, represented their proceeding, on the divine warrant, actually to receive Christ and salvation by faith, their own personal appropriation of them, and the pleasure they had in doing so. The symbolical actions of eating and drinking represented the same reception of spiritual blessings expressed in this symbolical language: "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—"Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

Jesus gave the bread to them, "*saying, This is my body.*" Surely the general emblematical nature of the ordinance which has already abundantly appeared, prepares the way for understanding in *what sense* he called the bread his body. He meant that the bread, which he had broken, and was handing to them, *represented* his body, which was soon to be crucified for them. But, the great Romish apostasy teaches that it means much more, namely, that when he said, "This is my body," and, "This is my blood," the bread and wine were entirely changed, as to their substance, being bread and wine no longer, but the real body of Christ, including flesh, blood, bones, nay, the whole Christ, in his humanity and divinity! Such is the revolting doctrine of transubstantiation, for the denying of which (though no man who has his reason and senses in exercise with regard to it can acknowledge it) thousands on thousands have been persecuted unto death. It might appear to be a waste of time to offer any refutation of this foolish and impious dogma, were it not for the astounding fact that vast multitudes believe, or profess to believe it. Without endeavouring to give a complete view of the question, two or three of the principal considerations may be stated.

First of all, then, we have the evidence of our senses against any such change taking place on the elements. In every case, after the prayer of blessing and thanksgiving, and the pronouncing of the words of the institution, there is the evidence of sight, and touch, and taste, that the bread is still bread, and the wine still wine. When our Lord turned the water into wine, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the governor of the feast did not find it like water still, but said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Did any such change take place, it would be obvious. We have all the proof, however, which our

senses can give, to the contrary; and, though faith rises higher than the senses, it is never contrary to them. The reality of miracles, too, can only be proved in connection with the testimony of the senses; nay, if that testimony be disregarded, there is an end to all reasoning on material objects.

Next, as to the argument of the Romanists that the words, "This is my body," and, "This is my blood," form positive assertions, which it is presumptuous to call in question, and which, however staggering, we are bound to believe: we reply, that we do not call in question, but fully acknowledge, these assertions, in the sense in which Christ himself made them; and we say, farther, that the presumption and unbelief are on the part of those who affix to them a sense subversive of the meaning which he intended them to bear. It is in vain to plead the positive form of the assertions, unless it be assumed that all such assertions must be taken literally, which it cannot be, with any shadow of truth. As for the words in question, we affirm, not that they may, but that they must, be understood figuratively, from the very nature of the case. The idiom, too, of all languages, but especially of that in which Jesus spoke, is quite in accordance with this interpretation. Had he spoken in the Latin or Greek tongue, he might have used words, the exact rendering of which would have been, This bread represents my body, or, is a sign of my body: and, This cup represents my blood. "But let it be observed," says a learned commentator,\* "that in the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Chaldeo-Syriac languages, there is no term which expresses to *mean*, *signify*, *denote*, though both the Greek and Latin abound with them: hence the Hebrews use a figure, and say, *it is*, for, *it signifies*." So, "The seven kine are" (that is, represent) "seven years." "The ten horns are" (that is, signify) "ten kings." God said of circumcision,† "This is my covenant;" though it was not the covenant itself, but the token, or sign, of the covenant. It is said of eating the paschal lamb,‡ "It is the Lord's passover;" though it was certainly not the actual passing over of the Israelites by the Lord, but the memorial of it. And, following this Hebrew idiom, there are many such expressions in the New Testament, though it was written in Greek; and to these expressions the same meaning must be attached, if they are to have any sense at all. Thus, "The field is" (that is, represents) "the world; the good seed are the children of

\* Dr A. Clarke on Matthew. † Gen. xvii. 10. ‡ Exod. xii. 11.

the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." When our Lord said, "I am the true vine," "I am the door," did he mean that he was literally a vine, or a door? Impossible! he meant, that he was like these; or that these were figures, or representations of him; and the mind must be obtuse indeed that misunderstands the language. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat," says Paul, "and did all drink of the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ," that is, represented Christ. "The seven stars are" (that is, represent) "the angels of the seven Churches: and the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches."—"What might this parable *be*?"\* that is, what does it signify? or, what is the meaning of it? Christ is called "our passover," not as being actually the passover himself, but as being what was typified by it. After such unequivocal testimony from the sacred writings, can any person doubt that, "This is my body," just means, This represents my body? "It was, most probably, in what was formerly called the Chaldaic, now the Syriac, that our Lord conversed with his disciples. Through the providence of God, we have complete versions of the Gospels in this language; and in them it is likely we have the precise words spoken by our Lord on this occasion:" nor would any man, even in the present day, speaking in the same language, use, among the people to whom it was vernacular, other terms to express, This represents my body, and, This represents my blood. But this form of speech is common, even in our own language, though we have terms enow to fill up the ellipsis. Suppose a man entering into a museum, enriched with the remains of ancient Greek sculpture; his eyes are attracted by a number of curious busts; and on inquiring what they are, he learns, this is Socrates, that Plato, a third Homer, &c. Is he deceived by this information? Not at all: he knows well that the busts he sees are not the identical persons, but only representations of the persons of these ancients, between which and the originals there is as essential a difference as between a human body instinct with all the principles of rational vitality, and a block of marble."† Again, then,

\* Luke viii. 9; see also John x. 6, xv. 5; Acts x. 17; Gal. iv. 24; Luke xv. 26, in the original.

† Dr Clarke.

we say that to the mind, unwarped by prejudice, it is as clear as day, that when Jesus Christ took up bread in his hands, brake it, and said, "This is my body," he intimated that the bread represented, or signified, his body. How very absurd and revolting the doctrine according to which men would first make, and then literally eat, the divine Redeemer! "One is almost tempted to suspect it to be the effect of arrogance, rather than of error, and to consider it as a mere insolent attempt to show the world, in the strongest instance they could invent, what monstrous things the clergy should dare to say, which the wretched laity should not dare to contradict; nay, which they should be forced to pretend they believed. In this view, the thought is admirable, and worthy of the most malicious wit that ever lorded it over the heritage of God. But it may deserve some serious reflection, whether it be not an instance of infatuation, to which God has given them up, that it may be a plain mark to all that will use common sense, of the grossest error in a Church which claims infallibility, and may not be intended by Providence as a kind of antidote against the rest of its poison."\*

"This is my body," said our Lord, "*which is given for you;*" and, as in the Apostle Paul's account, "*which is broken for you.*" It was given by God the Father; for, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." It was given cheerfully by the Son himself; for, "Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us." His body was given for us, in order that it might be broken, or crucified, for us: and he was indeed "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." How plainly and affectingly does the ordinance, in this view, teach the doctrine of the atonement, that doctrine which forms the very substance of the gospel! However this blessed truth may be set aside, or obscured, in the general tenor of any ministry, here at least it asserts its own place; and, as often as this institution is observed, and the saying repeated, "This is my body, given, broken for you," so often does the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, occupy the chief place of consideration, and come forward, bringing along with it the true ground of a sinner's hope, and the most touching appeals to the human heart. Indeed, in every view, this ordinance is admirably calculated to secure attention to the leading truths connected

\* Doddridge.

with our perishing condition by nature, and the way of acceptance by faith in the atonement.

"*This do,*" added our Lord, "*in remembrance of me.*" We shall consider the ordinance as a memorial of Christ, when we come to speak of the ends for which it was appointed, and therefore, proceed immediately to notice how, "*Likewise also (he took) the cup after supper.*" Matthew and Mark both mention that our Lord "gave thanks" before handing the cup. This was according to the custom of the Jews, who said grace twice, namely, once before the meat, and once before the drink. Perhaps it would be as well always to follow this order exactly at the Lord's supper. In our Church, however, we are accustomed to begin and end with prayer, which is rather more in accordance with our way at ordinary meals, at which, though we usually say grace twice, we are not careful to abstain from tasting drink till after the second grace. Our Lord took the cup, "*saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*" Here, again, we have an instance of the same figure already fully explained; for, surely, the cup was not, strictly speaking, the new testament itself, but the token of it: nay, the figure is double, for the very word, "cup," is put for the wine in the cup. The meaning of the words seems to be, The wine in this cup is the emblem of my blood, by the shedding of which the new testament, or covenant, the method of salvation by grace, is to be ratified, and all its blessings are to be purchased. Let us consider well this view of the gospel as the new covenant, the covenant of grace, and lay hold of it as such. Jesus is styled the "Mediator of the new covenant;" his blood is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant;" and its efficacy, in delivering sinners, is thus described in Zechariah: "As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."<sup>\*</sup> Here, again, we have the plainest and most affecting statement of the atoning effect of the Redeemer's death: "My blood, which is shed for you," said he, or, as is in Matthew, "which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

Having expressed himself thus with regard to the cup, he also said, according to Matthew, "Drink ye all of it:" and Mark says, "He gave it to them; and they all drank of it." From our Lord's position at table, he would give the bread and wine, with his own hands, only to the disci-

<sup>\*</sup> See Exod. xxiv. 8; Zech. ix. 11; Heb. ix. 15, xiii. 20.



ple, or disciples, nearest to him; and they would then be handed round, from one to another, till all partook of them. It would be with the eucharistical as with the passover cup, of which our Lord said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves." This way of distribution still, is most agreeable to the original model, and also most expressive of communion, or joint participation.

And now, our Lord seems, from Matthew, to have repeated the sentiment he uttered before during the paschal supper; for, according to that evangelist, he said, after the distribution of the elements, "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit," or product, "of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." As we are sure he never ate another passover, so there is reason to think that he never again celebrated the Lord's supper, and, probably, never again tasted wine. As to his making himself known to the disciples in the breaking of bread at Emmaus, that seems to have been at a common meal. And, whereas it is said that they "did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead," his own words seem to imply that no wine could have been used on such an occasion.\* But the words seem to mean, not that he was ever literally to drink wine again with his disciples on earth, but that, after his assumption of the mediatorial kingdom, and after his ascension, he would, in the joys of heaven, shadowed forth by the figure of eating and drinking, share with them in far nobler entertainments than even the noblest which the Church on earth could furnish.

It appears, from what follows, in Luke, that Jesus said other things before he left the place where the passover and Lord's supper were observed; and many hold, with much probability, that it was now he spoke what is found in the 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of John; but we must here notice, as intimately connected with the ordinances in which he had been engaged with his disciples, that, at the close of the service, and before they went out to the Mount of Olives, "they sung a hymn."† Now, it is known, from Jewish writers, that the Jews were accustomed to sing at the passover the Psalms, from the 113th to the 118th inclusive, of which the 114th expressly relates to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. Our Lord and his dis-

\* Luke xxiv. 30-35; Acts x. 41.

† Matthew and Mark, *ὕμνον*.

ciples may have sung these psalms on this occasion; or, they may have sung some other hymn still more exactly appropriate to the Christian feast.\* A solemn act of praise was well suited to the occasion, and furnishes an example which we should follow both in form and in spirit, on every similar opportunity.

Such, in the *first* place, were the chief circumstances attending the institution and first observance of the Lord's supper. Let us now briefly consider

## II. The *names* of this ordinance.

1. It is called a *Sacrament*. It is one of the two sacraments of the Christian Church. This name is not found in Scripture, but it is of very early origin; and it is, at least, useful to include both the institutions in question, and to express, without a circumlocution, "a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." The derivation of the word may convey the idea of a sacred thing or a mystery. Indeed, the corresponding Latin word usually signifies the oath† which was taken by soldiers to be faithful to their commander. It is true that communicants do not take any oath in words; yet, in the very act of communicating, they virtually engage to be the Lord's, and enlist themselves, so to speak, under the banner of Jesus Christ, as "the Captain of their salvation." In this view, they engage to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to "fight the good fight of faith," and to be "faithful unto death, that they may receive the crown of life."

2. This ordinance is sometimes called the *Eucharist*. This name is not found exactly in Scripture, though there is a foundation laid for it there, and it was very early used by Christian writers. The word signifies thanksgiving, or the ordinance of thanksgiving, and is adopted from the circumstance of our Lord's having solemnly given thanks‡ at its celebration. This name, then, well expresses one leading circumstance connected with the ordinance, and reminds us to cultivate the disposition of gratitude, and to engage in the exercise of praise to our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer.

3. The most common name for this ordinance, and it is

\* See the most of the commentators, especially Grotius, Lightfoot and Whitby.

† ——— Non ego perfidum  
Dixi sacramentum.—HOR.

‡ 'Εὐχαριστίας.

a scriptural name, is, *the Lord's supper*. In 1 Cor. xi. 20, the apostle says, "When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry and another is drunken." That is, they went about it in so improper a way that it did not deserve to be called the Lord's supper; from which, however, it appears that this was the usual name of the ordinance. It is called a supper, because it was first observed in the evening, because it is a literal feast, in which there are meat and drink for the body, and because it is a figurative feast, in which there is nourishment for the soul. And it is called the *Lord's* supper because it was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is in remembrance of him, and because it is intended only for those who belong to him. Thus, this name distinguishes it from every common entertainment. This, however, is not the only scriptural name of it, for it is called,

4. *The Lord's table*. In the words of the apostle to the Corinthians,\* "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." This name is obviously borrowed from the table posture of Christ and the disciples at the passover, and then at this ordinance; and suggests the general idea according to which the service should be conducted.

5. This ordinance is also called, in Scripture, "*The breaking of bread*." Though this expression does not always denote the Lord's supper, it sometimes does; for example, when it is said of the converts that they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," and when it is said, "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples (at Troas) came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."† This is also obviously borrowed from one solemn act which is characteristic of the institution.

Once more here, this ordinance is called "*The communion*." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Communion, that is, joint participation or fellowship. This is very expressive of one of the ends of the institution, as will soon appear. But, indeed, all its names open up so much of its design that they cannot be enlarged on without anticipating what belongs more properly to another head.

\* 1 Cor. x. 21.

† Acts ii. 42, xx. 7.

## LECTURE CXVII.

LUKE XXII. 19, 20.

CONTINUED.

LET us now consider,

III. The *ends* for which the Lord's supper is appointed.

1. It is appointed to be *a memorial of Christ*. That this is its great leading design is plain from our Lord's own words: "This do in remembrance of me." It may be regarded as a token of love left to us by him, our departing friend, that, when we look on it, we may remember him. But, is there any danger of our forgetting this friend who so loved us as to give himself for us? There would be none, were it not for the depravity and treachery of our hearts, and the witcheries of the world: because of these, however, the ordinance is wisely and graciously appointed, to keep us in remembrance of our divine Benefactor. We may remark here, that the observance of this institution, as a memorial, requires a knowledge of what Scripture teaches concerning Christ; for, how can we remember what we never knew? And, while this is a memorial of him in general, it is, more particularly, a memorial of him as dying on the cross for our sins. Here he is, in figure, "evidently set forth crucified among us." This observance, renewed from time to time, serves to keep alive his memory in the Church, and to diffuse his name throughout the world. It is one of the means for fulfilling the prophecy, "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." It is obviously fitted to revive, excite, and confirm the suitable remembrance of him in our minds, to stir us up to think habitually of him, and to enable us to give diligent heed to the things which we have heard and known, lest at any time we let them slip. Let us, then, in this ordinance, remember him as our Saviour and our Lord,

as God and man, as dying for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He is gone; but let him not be forgotten. He is on high, transacting our business; but let him be present to our minds. Let us remember him who never forgets us; and let each of us say, "I will remember thy love more than wine:" "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy." This is the leading end of this ordinance. But, in connection with this, there are several other important ends which we find pointed out in express texts of Scripture, or draw from the general bearing of the institution, by just inference. We observe, then, that the Lord's supper is,

2. *A standing evidence of the truth of Christianity.* The remembrance which it excites and maintains is something more than a remembrance that certain things are affirmed of Jesus of Nazareth: it is a remembrance of these as true; and the ordinance itself is one chain in the link of the proof that they are so. This is shown as follows: The Lord's supper must have been instituted at the time specified in the New Testament, or afterwards. If it was not instituted at the time mentioned in the New Testament, those to whom it was first proposed at a later period could not but be sensible of the circumstance that they had never heard of it before, and they could not have believed it to be an ancient institution, with their knowledge of that circumstance. At every conceivable time there must have been insuperable difficulties in the way of Christians submitting to any such imposition. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, declare the ordinance to have been instituted and observed by Christ, and give the circumstances very minutely. It is stated, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the disciples celebrated it again, only ten days after our Lord's ascension, and continued it afterwards. The early Christian writers declare it to have been the constant practice in their day. Justin Martyr, who was born about the end of the first century, says, "All Christians, both of the city and country, assemble on Sunday, because our Lord rose from the dead on that day; and then we listen to the reading of the writings of the prophets and apostles; then the person presiding preaches to the congregation, exhorting them to follow, and perform, the things which they hear. After this, we all join in prayer, and then celebrate the sacrament; and those

who are willing and able give alms." History and the nature of the case unite in showing the impossibility of the observance being surreptitiously foisted into the Church. Christ's enemies would never have introduced it in honour of one whom they hated and despised. His own disciples were too honest to have attempted an imposition, and too well acquainted with facts to have been imposed on themselves. The ordinance, therefore, was appointed by Jesus himself; and by him, be it remarked, as claiming to be Messiah, and as declaring that he was about to die, and that as a sacrifice for sin. It is impossible to account for the existence of this custom on any principle which does not involve the truth of Christianity; and the method of transmitting the evidence, thus embodied, in an outward, expressive, permanent ordinance, is truly admirable. As often as we observe this institution, we have an evidence to our senses of the truth of the leading facts of the Christian history, and also of this most important principle, that the doctrine of the atonement forms the very essence of Christianity, and is inseparably interwoven with it.

3. Another end of the Lord's supper is to furnish an opportunity of the *open profession of the Christian religion in general, and, especially, of our trusting in the sacrifice of Christ for forgiveness and acceptance with God.* When once we do really "believe with the heart unto righteousness," then "with our mouth," and in our actions in general, and in this action in particular, "confession is made unto salvation." The necessity of confession, or profession, is expressly taught. If we confess Christ, he will confess us; if we deny him, he will also deny us. Now, the observance of the Lord's supper is one of the circumstances by which it is intended that the followers of Christ should be distinguished from others. It is the badge of their profession. In this ordinance we profess ourselves to be Christians; nay, we declare our dependence on the atoning death of Christ for salvation. It is to this profession that the words point, "Ye do show," or proclaim,\* "the Lord's death, till he come." We publish his death, and virtually say, that we place our hope on it. We testify that we believe him to be able to save, and look to him for our own salvation. We show that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and declare that, though the doctrine of Christ crucified be to some a stumbling-block and foolishness, it is to us the power of

\* Καταγγελλομεν.

God, and the wisdom of God. The language of our partaking is, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world." And this "good profession we profess before many witnesses;" for we show forth the Lord's death in the presence of God, of angels, and of men.

4. Another end of the Lord's supper is to be *an act of Church fellowship, or communion*. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"—is it not the joint participation, in the literal sense, of the same wine, and a token of our joint participation of the same spiritual privileges which are the purchase of his blood? "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"—is it not a joint participation, in the literal sense, of the same food, and a token of our sharing together in those blessings which he procured at the expense of his sufferings unto death? "For, we being many, are one bread," or loaf, "and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Even men of the world and heathens consider the act of voluntarily eating and drinking together as a pledge of inviolable friendship;\* much more ought Christians to consider this sacred feast in that light. They appear at the table in one body, or one company together. This is very expressive of their being members one of another, through Christ their head. They thus voluntarily associate together, both as members of the universal Church, and as members of a particular Church, to the discipline and government of which they submit themselves, and in the prosperity of which they become bound to take a lively interest. Hence our Church judges the private celebration of the ordinance inconsistent with its design, and, therefore, administers it only in the church.

Here let us take in the consideration that it is intended to be a communion, not only with our fellow-Christians, but with *God the Father, Son, and Spirit*. In this, as much, at least, as in other ordinances, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," and "the communion of the Holy Ghost" is with us. Here, the Saviour may be especially considered as saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice,

\* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. See Elsner's note on this text. "Pagani in sacris convivii firmissimum amicitiae vinculum inesse existimabant," &c.

and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He is the Master of the feast; and, though his bodily and visible presence is not with us, he is present, not only by his divine ubiquity, but by his gracious influences. As the sun may be said to be with us when we have his beams shining on us, or enjoy, in any degree, his light and warmth, though his body is far above us, so Jesus Christ, though the heavens must retain him until the time of the restitution of all things, is with his people when they enjoy his gracious spiritual presence, illuminating, sanctifying, and comforting their souls.

5. The Lord's supper gives an opportunity of *covenanting with God, and engaging to be the Lord's*. There are some who are for discarding the ideas, and the very expressions of covenanting, engaging, and vowing to the Lord, on this and every other occasion—but very rashly and unscripturally. It is quite true that these exercises have sometimes been accompanied with the spirit of legality and bondage; but it does not follow that they are to be discountenanced altogether, or that they have no meaning, or importance, according to the evangelical system.

As to the objection to one of these expressions—covenanting—it is met in the face by the words, "This cup is the new testament," or covenant, "in my blood." Let it be remembered that God has thrown his dispensation of mercy to sinners into the form of a covenant; it is a covenant of grace, indeed, in which all is of free, sovereign, unmerited favour, and all that is required of us is also promised to us; but still it is a covenant. Now, though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itself and on God's part, the evidence of its certainty is made more obvious and more affecting to us by these outward signs. It is necessary, too, notwithstanding all that Christ has done as the Mediator and Surety, that we do actually lay hold of that covenant for ourselves. This we do, when we do what is signified by this ordinance—that is, receive Christ by faith; and of this our partaking of the bread and wine is an outward declaration. The language of that action is: "We heartily consent to the covenant of grace; we cordially agree to the plan of salvation through the Redeemer; and, in token of this, now publicly affix our seal to it."

As to the very similar ideas of vowing, self-dedication, and engagement to be the Lord's, however some may err with regard to them, we ought not to dismiss them, but we



should be careful to ascertain what, with regard to them, is agreeable or not agreeable to the Word of God in general, and to the genius of the Gospel in particular. The common and the correct opinion is, that though there is no verbal form of a vow or of self-dedication at the Lord's table, yet our being partakers of it is an act which has as plain and solemn a meaning as any words could have; that it implies an acknowledgment of our being bound to follow Christ; and that it is a tacit declaration, under more than ordinarily solemn circumstances, that we resolve to be faithful to him. So far is this from being inconsistent with the primary idea of remembering Christ, that we hold it to be impossible to remember him aright without something of this kind being present to the mind. If those who find fault with the expression, "vowing," would take a calm view of its meaning, they would see the groundlessness of their opposition. But we are fairly entitled to go farther, and to say that the charge of being unscriptural may be retorted on those who wish to explode such forms of expression. It is true that they require explanation; but, if there be no right sense in which they can be used—if it be wrong to make any resolution, in any way, to obey God—then was Joshua wrong, when he said, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord;" then was David wrong, when he said, "I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly."—"Thy vows are upon me, O God."—"I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Then, also, is the Church wrong, when she accompanies the Psalmist in these and many similar passages. But who is he that dares to condemn expressions which the Spirit of God sanctions? What was ceremonial and temporary in vowing is, indeed, done away; but what was signified by the temporary ceremony remains. Sacrifices, for example, no longer exist, in the strict sense; yet it is still scriptural to call a broken spirit, praise, and charity, sacrifices.\* So, as to vows, we are now called on to devote ourselves, though not costly oblations, to God. Hence, Isaiah, in reference to gospel times, foretells: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." Hence, too, we read of the Churches of Macedonia, that "they first gave their own selves to the Lord." This every believer does, when he first submits to the grace of God: every instance, however, of this genuine submission is accompanied

\* Ps. li. 17; Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

by a resolution, formed in God's strength, to be faithful; and every renewed exercise of faith is also so accompanied. But, farther, this submission and this resolution are implied and represented in every outward ordinance, inasmuch as actions, as well as words, express ideas. Under the Mosaic law, the servant who allowed his ear to be bored through, was thereby as firmly engaged to continue with his master, as if he had vowed, in as many words, "I will serve thee for ever." So, let whoever will controvert it, it will continue to be the commonly received opinion, that he who partakes of the communion is, by that very act, as completely and voluntarily bound to serve the Lord, as if he had engaged aloud to do so in the plainest terms of speech, or subscribed, with his own hand, a written deed to that effect. It follows, too, by necessary consequence, that, though he is not bound to anything to which he was not in duty bound before, yet, if he abandon himself to sin, he is justly chargeable with breach of engagement. This argument does not rest on anything peculiar to the supper; but it applies to it with particular force.

6. Another very comprehensive end of this ordinance is to be a *means of cherishing all the graces of the divine life*. We say of *cherishing* them, not of implanting them; for, though the grace of God is not to be limited, and may reach the heart, for the first time, in any circumstances, those who partake of the Lord's supper ought already to be possessed of the Christian character in some degree. As bread and wine, then, nourish the body, so does this ordinance serve for spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. More particularly, it serves to increase *knowledge*, both by the previous examination whether we discern the Lord's body, and also by giving, at the time of celebration, a very clear and striking view of the substance of the gospel, and making it the object of our steady and deep attention. It increases our *faith*, as it confirms, to our very senses, the truth of Christianity, and of its leading doctrine, and tends to remove distrust of the divine mercy, and to lead us to rest on Christ with full confidence. When the doubting disciple may be ready, unreasonably, to say with Thomas, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," Jesus may be considered as standing in the midst of us, and saying, "Peace be unto you. Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach

hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless but believing." This ordinance cherishes the grace of *repentance*, as it demonstrates the evil of sin, and calls on us "to look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn." It cherishes the grace of *love*—love to God the Father, who so loved us as to give up his only-begotten and well-beloved Son for us—love to the Son, who so loved us as to give himself for us—and love to one another, in being reconciled to those with whom we may be at variance, and in taking a lively interest in each other's temporal and eternal welfare. It cherishes *gratitude and praise*, by affording an amazing display of the favours which call for them, and an inviting opportunity for their exercise; so that, if our hearts be at all touched, we are then eager to join in the doxology: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." It cherishes *humility*, by leading us to contrast our own unworthiness with the wonderful grace manifested towards us, and to lie low in the dust of self-abasement before the Lord. It greatly contributes to our *comfort*, by the glorious views it presents of the infinite compassion of God to us perishing sinners, and by its being often accompanied by joy in the Holy Ghost in more than ordinary measure, so that we sit under the Redeemer's shadow with great delight, and find his fruit sweet to our taste. It tends to deepen our *hatred of sin* in all its forms; for then, if ever, it is seen and felt to be shameful, abominable, polluting, and ruinous. And it cherishes the love of *holiness*, and encourages us to follow after it, by the most engaging representation of its excellence, and the most tender and most powerful motives to its cultivation. It appeals to every ingenuous principle within us, whether, henceforth, instead of crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame by a life of sin, we will not rather live to him who died for us and rose again. When these impressions, too, are properly followed out, they have a most beneficial permanent influence on our whole feelings and habits.

Once more, this ordinance is intended to *lead our thoughts forward to our Lord's second coming*. It is not only retrospective, but prospective. It is not only a remembrance of something past, but an anticipation of something future. In the language of the apostle Paul, "Ye do show the

Lord's death till he come." We are reminded, and profess, that the same Lord who "died for our sins, rose again for our justification," is exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, making intercession for us, and will come again, at the last day, to judge the world. Of this great event we have then a pledge before our eyes; and, when we follow out the thought in believing anticipation, we realize it, to our great benefit and comfort. We hear the last trumpet sound, and see the dead, small and great, stand before God. We behold the Son of man seated on the throne of judgment, and follow the procedure and the results of that great day. And, however alarming this may be in another connection, it is pleasing in this, for we see that he will come as Judge, with the very same love with which he died for us on the cross. We feel that "as Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, unto them that look for him will he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." Thus we are encouraged and drawn out in desires for his presence; so that when we hear the words, "He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly," we are ready to say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

From what has been said, you will now readily perceive *the erroneous nature of various opinions* which are entertained by different parties with regard to the Lord's supper. No ordinance whatever has been more perverted by error, or more obscured by superstition.

Mark, first, the error of the *Quakers*, or *Friends*, in not observing the ordinance at all. They have entirely discontinued it, as well as baptism, looking on it as of a temporary nature. But we have traced up its observance through the different ages of the Church, and seen how it is expressly directed to be continued till Christ come. Besides, instead of there being less reason for observing it now than in the first ages of Christianity, there is more reason; for the more remote from the time of Christ's death the period at which we live, the greater need have we for a memorial of it.

Observe, next, the errors of the *Roman Catholics* on this subject. We need not say more to show the folly of the dogma of transubstantiation. You will also perceive, at once, the heretical nature of the whole sacrifice of the "mass," as they call it—that gross perversion of this most simple and beautiful institution. It is not a sacrifice, but a memorial of a sacrifice, that is, of the only real sacrifice for sin ever offered, that "one offering by which Jesus hath

perfected for ever them that are sanctified." \* Another error of that great apostasy is the giving of the sacrament only in one kind, or the withholding of the cup from the people, in direct violation of the command of Jesus Christ himself, "Drink ye all of it." It is also most unscripturally held that this sacrament, as well as baptism, confers grace of itself by the mere partaking of it,† and that the efficacy depends on the intention of the administrator, instead of its being a means dependent, and only dependent, on God's grace, and the state of the receiver.‡

Here notice, also, the *Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation*, according to which, though there is no change in the substance of the bread and wine, the real body, and the real blood of Christ are literally present, and literally partaken off, together with the elements. Most of the arguments against transubstantiation are applicable here, particularly that drawn from the evidence of our senses, which would show if real flesh and blood were present, and that drawn from the figurative nature of language, which requires neither the one absurd supposition nor the other to give it full meaning.

And here notice certain errors of *Protestants*, which, though not chargeable on Protestantism, as a system (and this is very important), are yet cherished, one by one class of persons, who profess the Protestant faith, and another by another. Among errors and abuses connected with this ordinance may be noticed, the extreme of irreverence, on the one hand, in rushing forward to it carelessly, and without due preparation; and the extreme of superstition on the other, in looking on it as something very dreadful and repelling, and in exalting it to an undue place among the ordinances of God, as if something were necessary to the proper observance of it, altogether different from what is necessary to the due observance of prayer, for example; the making of it a mere qualification for civil office; the supposing that it operates unintelligibly, and as a charm, and not considering that it is a rational and simple means, in the hand of God, of assisting the mind; the very unfrequent observance of it; the putting of it in the place of Christ, or of faith, or of the Holy Spirit; the looking on the intention of it as answered by the mere observance, and

\* See Heb. ix. 12, 25-28; x. 10, 12-18.

† "Ex opere operato."

‡ See 1 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. iii. 21; 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

relaxing in duty afterwards, instead of improving it as an abiding motive to a holy life; and the observing of it for improper or inadequate reasons, such as to conceal sin, to be like others, or merely to please friends—any reason, in a word, short of a supreme regard to the command and the honour of the Redeemer.

Again, from the general nature and design of the ordinance, it is not difficult to infer *who have a right to it*. Here two things must be considered—who have a right to it in the sight of men, so that none are entitled authoritatively to exclude them; and who have a right to it in the sight of God, so that they should not exclude themselves. It must now be sufficiently plain that those only have a right, in the sight of men, who have a competent knowledge and make a credible profession of the Christian religion. Those who rule in the Church can judge only of these qualifications; but of these they are expressly bound to judge; and those persons whose ignorance, and immorality, and neglect of the other divine institutions, leave no room to hope that they are Christians, ought not to be received to communion, however they may urge it. When the office-bearers of the Church exclude such persons, they do not take too much upon them, but only exercise for the Church a power which is inherent in every other society, and which the Head of the Church has conferred upon it, in consistence with Scripture—the power of determining who shall belong to its own body. Now, nothing is more essential to any community than the Christian character is to Church fellowship. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” The ignorant and scandalous are evidently to be excluded. In order, however, to have a right in the sight of God, more is necessary than knowledge and a credible profession, namely, real grace in the heart, the being in a state of acceptance and regeneration; and those who are not thus Christians indeed, should, of their own accord, abstain from this ordinance. It is quite obvious that, to such, the institution cannot answer its ends, and that their observing it would be a hypocritical profanation of it. The warning of the apostle demands most serious consideration, “Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?"

Let not, however, this warning be misapplied, so as to discourage the humble and contrite. Where there is the character of the true Christian in any degree—where there is faith, even as a grain of mustard seed—where there is the least particle of sincere love to the Saviour, there is the right to this ordinance, in the sight of God, and the certainty of a welcome. The Lord will look graciously to those who are of a contrite spirit, and tremble at his Word. "The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

If, on examination, a person is fully persuaded that he is a true Christian, if he is possessed of the assurance of hope, then his duty to communicate must be plain. But what is his duty, if he cannot fully attain to this? In the Larger Catechism, the following question is stated: "May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's supper?" and thus judiciously answered, "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof, and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desire to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity; in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians), he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have his doubts resolved; and so doing, he may, and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that he may be farther strengthened." Bearing closely on the same inquiry, the following sentiments of an American divine,\* are also worthy of consideration: "As the moral character of man is, at the best, but imperfectly known by himself, and as evangelical assurance is no" (necessary) "part of the character of a new

\* Dr Dwight.

convert, it is an indispensable qualification for communion in the Church of Christ, particularly at the sacramental table, that the candidate possess a rational and preponderating persuasion of his own sincere piety. In all cases where certainty is unattainable, no rule exists for our direction, but the commanding probability. The commanding probability ought, therefore, to control in this case, because certainty is evidently by the supposition beyond our reach."—"We know that we shall commit sin if we neglect to make this profession; but we do not know that we shall sin in making it. On the contrary, we are furnished with a commanding probability, that, if we make a profession of religion, in this case, we shall not sin, but perform a service acceptable to God. To do this in the case supposed, becomes, then, if I mistake not, our unquestionable duty."—"By a rational preponderating persuasion, I intend such a one as is the result of repeated, thorough, solemn, self-examination, aided by a faithful resort to books, which exhibit the genuine evidences of piety, and by the advice of wise and good men, particularly ministers of the gospel. He who does not, in a case of this magnitude, seek for all these, is regardless of his own well-being."

*You who are living wilfully in the absolute neglect of this ordinance, consider your guilt and danger.* The soul who was clean, and refused or neglected to eat the passover, was to bear his sin, and be cut off;\* and the contempt of this Christian institution cannot be a less heinous offence. The command is clear and express, and yet you disregard it. By this conduct you neglect to follow up the obligations of your baptism; you seek not to be numbered with Christ's people, but prefer to have your lot with his despisers; you refuse communion with him, and with the Church; and you slight his love, his atoning death, and his dying command. You may endeavour to palliate this; but it is truly a heinous offence. Think not that, by abstaining from this ordinance, you avoid the obligation to a holy life; for, you are bound to that, whether you choose or not. What excuse can you possibly have? Do you say that you are not prepared—not in a fit state for the Lord's supper? Be it so. But, will you therefore rest contented in the neglect of a positive precept? Nay, will you even make a merit of such neglect? Your want of fitness is your sin and danger, and a dreadful sin and danger too; for what does it imply? It implies that

\* Exod. xii. 15; Numb. ix. 13.



you are destitute of saving knowledge, faith, love, and holiness. But if you are thus unfit for the communion, you are unfit for death and judgment; and, were you to die in your present state, where would you be? You are shut up to sin at present. You sin if you partake of this ordinance, and you sin if you do not partake of it. What, then, ought you to do? Ought you to communicate in a state of unbelief and impenitence? No; by no means. As the best thing you can do, while you are in a graceless state, is, of two dreadful evils, to choose the least, that is, to abstain from profaning the Lord's supper, you should neither come to it unprepared, nor should you continue unprepared. Your only path of duty and safety is forthwith to seek for preparation, by receiving the Saviour, turning from sin, and putting yourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus shall you be fit for this pleasing service, and, in its performance, taste the sweetness of the Saviour's love.

*Finally,* You who have the habitual preparation of being in a state of grace, see that, in every prospect of partaking of this ordinance, you have the actual preparation of *grace in exercise*. Examine yourselves anew. Commune with your own hearts, and be still. Avail yourselves of the usual preparatory exercises in public; and be faithful to your own convictions in private. "Purge out the old leaven;" cherish good dispositions; and be much in prayer to God. Say unto him, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord, that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works."—"O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God."

## LECTURE CXVIII.

LUKE XXII. 21-30.

"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! 23. And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. ¶ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

WE noticed, on a former occasion, that the question has been much agitated whether Judas partook of the Lord's supper, some holding that, though he ate the passover with Christ and the other apostles, he went out before the institution of the Christian ordinance, and others, that he remained all the time. Without being positive, and without intending to attach much importance to the question, I incline to the opinion that he was a communicant. With regard to the alleged improbability of this, on the ground that, if his own conscience would have allowed him, our Lord would not have allowed the traitor to profane this ordinance, more especially as his treachery had already been made known to the other disciples—there is no reason to suppose that one who had been habitually acting in so hypocritical a manner would hesitate to act the hypocrite now; nor had Jesus, strictly speaking, divulged his treachery, for, he had not mentioned his covenanting with the rulers to betray him for a certain sum, but had merely foretold that he was about to betray him—a crime which was not yet consummated. It is an established rule in reasoning, to argue,

not from what is disputed to what is allowed, but from what is allowed to what is disputed. It is quite certain, then, and universally agreed, that Judas was an apostle: the point in dispute is, Was he a communicant? Whatever, therefore, be the importance attached to the question, and whatever the answer given to it, it may be fairly stated thus, We are sure that Judas was employed as a minister and an apostle by Christ, knowing him to be a hypocrite and a traitor; can any probable conclusion be drawn from this fact as to whether our Lord would admit or reject him as a communicant? The natural inference seems decidedly against the necessity of any interference to exclude him. We also noticed that the opinion we should hold as to what the character of communicants ought to be, does not at all depend on the way in which this question is answered: for, if we hold that Judas did not remain till the Lord's supper was celebrated, we may fairly infer that wicked men ought to abstain from it; whereas, if we hold that he did remain, then we must esteem that an instance of base hypocrisy, not to be imitated, but avoided.

Leaving such conjectural reasonings, and coming to scriptural authority, the way in which the passage now before us opens is quite decisive, if left to speak for itself, and if no liberty be taken with it; for, immediately after the words of the institution of the Lord's supper, and without any break in the connection, Christ is represented by Luke as adding, "*But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*" Anxious, however, to avoid what they imagine would be a supposition unworthy of the sacredness of this ordinance, many very respectable judges hold that these words are introduced by Luke out of the order of time, and endeavour to prove that Judas was gone before the Lord's supper, from John xiii. 30, where, after the account of our Lord's pointing out to John, Judas as the traitor, by giving him the sop, or morsel, when he had dipped it in the sauce, John adds, "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out." The applicability, however, of these words to the point in hand depends entirely on the correctness of the supposition that the supper mentioned in the 13th chapter of John was the supper in Jerusalem on the evening of the passover. Now, many excellent expositors remark, and I think justly, that that supposition is quite gratuitous, there being no mention of that being the passover, nay, there being a plain declaration

to the contrary, inasmuch as it is stated, in the beginning of that chapter, that the circumstances related in the chapter took place "before the feast of the passover:" not immediately before the eating of the paschal lamb, and the same evening, as some would explain away the clause, but "before the *feast* of the passover;"\* that is, before the day, or rather days, set apart for that feast. In short, John there speaks of a supper which took place in Bethany, the same, in the opinion of many, with that mentioned in Matthew xxvi. 6, in the house of Simon the leper, "two days before the passover." The meaning of the quotation would thus be, that, when Judas received the sop, he went out, left Bethany, and proceeded to Jerusalem, to consult about delivering up Jesus. Had that been the night of the passover, there could hardly have been either time or opportunity for him to have made the arrangements in question, for the rulers must have been engaged in observing the passover, with their several families. On the circumstance mentioned (John xiii. 29), that the disciples thought Jesus said to Judas, "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast," it has been remarked,† not only that the words, in their most natural meaning, imply that the feast was not yet begun, but that the disciples knew well that on the day of the passover there was neither buying nor selling in Jerusalem, and, therefore, that this did not happen on the paschal evening.

If, then, it was so that Judas made a hypocritical profession of attachment to Christ in this way, the circumstance may justly be considered as teaching that we are not authoritatively to judge of members of the Church by the evil lurking in their hearts, which we cannot certainly discern, but by their profession and conduct—that even where authoritative exclusion is carried as far as Scripture warrants, it is not to be expected that the Church will be absolutely pure—and that every man should faithfully examine him-

\* Προ δε τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα.

† By Calmet and others. The authorities on this question are much opposed to each other. In support of the opinion that Judas was not at the Lord's supper, see Doddridge, Guyse, and others. That Judas was at the Lord's table is argued by Lightfoot, at great length; also by Whitby, Dr Sam. Clarke, Kidder in his *Demonstr. of the Messiah*, iii. 3, Henry, &c. Macknight thinks that John xiii. describes the paschal supper, but that Judas was at the Lord's supper notwithstanding. Scott also holds John xiii. to relate to the passover evening, but seems quite undecided as to whether Judas was a communicant. Poole's *Synopsis* may also be consulted.

self lest he "eat and drink unworthily," and so be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Verse 22: "*And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!*" The word\* rendered "goeth," signifies, in this place, "dieth," or, is about to die; so, it is not unusual for us to say of a man who is at the point of death, "He is just going," or "departing," and of one who is dead, "He is gone;" and the word is very expressive of the removal of the soul from everything earthly. The Son of man goeth "as it was determined," decreed, or fixed in the purpose of God. The expression in Matthew and Mark is, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him;" but, whether the verse under consideration be exactly parallel to the passages of these two evangelists, which occur before their account of the Lord's supper, or whether our Lord again adverted to the subject of Judas' treachery after the observance of that ordinance, is (as you will infer from what we have already said) a matter of dispute.† Be this, however, as it may, the death of Christ was both "determined," or decreed, and "written," or foretold in prophecy; and not only so, but whatever difficulty there may be in understanding how the two things are consistent, the divine decree did not destroy the responsibility of Judas, or the other agents in the crime, but left it untouched and entire. It was certainly written because it was fixed. But, as Judas could not be said to be influenced to betray Christ by the consideration that his death was decreed, seeing he was ignorant of any such decree, nor yet by the consideration of its being so written, seeing he did not understand the prophecy, so, neither the decree nor the prediction interfered with his responsibility, or extenuated his crime. These combined doctrines are clearly taught, not only in this verse, but also in the two following passages in the Acts of the Apostles.‡ "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."—"Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined

\* *Προσμεταίωμι*:—*ἀπερχομαι* and *οἶκισται* are used in the same sense by the Greek classical writers, and *abi* by the Latin.

† See Matt. xxvi. 21-24; Mark xiv. 18-21.

‡ Acts ii. 23, iv. 27.

before to be done." With regard to sinful actions, such as this, God not only foresees and foretells that men, left to themselves, will do them, but determines to leave them to themselves; and his determination, or decree, to this extent, is sufficient, without any positive influence; his permission is enough. God's determination, or decree, with regard to holiness and salvation, is different. To determine to make a sinner believe and obey the truth, supposes, in order to its accomplishment, a positive interposition of divine power, a bestowing of special grace. Such positive gracious interposition no sinner deserves, and no sinner, left to himself, would ever desire; and, therefore, God bestows it freely, according to his own sovereign will and purpose. From this, it is clear that all the evil which enters into, or results from any action, or course of action, is of man, and all the good of God. In particular, the death of Christ furnishes at once the most shocking display of human depravity and the most glorious exhibition of the divine perfections. In whatever way, then, the Lord may cause the wrath and the wickedness of man to praise him, let us beware of the impiety and blasphemy of endeavouring to fix any of the blame of our sins on him. In the words of Jehovah, by Jeremiah: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" And in the language of James: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

"Woe unto that man by whom he (the Son of man) is betrayed." As Judas' guilt was very heinous, so his consequent misery was very great. We shall speak of the close of his life on earth (if it please God), when we come to the last mention of him by Luke; but we may here notice the awful sentiment expressed by our Lord, according to Matthew and Mark: "It had been good for that man that he had not been born." This clearly implied that Judas' soul was lost. Nay, this is utterly subversive of the heresy of the Universalists, as they are called, who deny the eternity of future punishment, and hold that all men will be happy at last; for, though a man were to suffer the heaviest

punishment possible, during the longest period that can be conceived, short of absolute eternity, and then to become happy, even in the lowest degree that can be conceived, and to continue thus happy for ever, it could not be affirmed of him, with truth, that it had been good for him that he had never been born; on the contrary, a period would arrive when the happiness he had enjoyed would not only equal, but greatly surpass, all the misery he had ever endured, so that it would be good for him that he had been born.

*"And they began to inquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing."* According to Matthew, "They were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Christ, Lord, is it I?" If these passages be exactly parallel, the 22d and 23d verses in Luke must be considered as introduced after the order of time, though naturally connected with the mention of Judas in the 21st verse. Christ made known the traitor first privately to John at the supper mentioned in the 13th chapter of his Gospel, and then openly to all the apostles, when, in answer to Judas' question,\* "Master, is it I?" he replied in the affirmative, "Thou hast said." The humility of the eleven believing apostles, who, instead of being hasty to accuse, or suspect any other person, suspected, each of them, himself, well deserves our notice and imitation. As the Word of God teaches us to fear that there are still traitors among us, and warns us that "iniquity shall abound, and the love of many wax cold," instead of wasting our thoughts on what is foreign to us, and feeling secure ourselves, it becomes us, in the remembrance of our own weakness, and of the temptations to which we are exposed, not to be high-minded, but to fear—to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy—to be very watchful, and to depend, not on our own strength, but on God's. This frame is always becoming, but is especially called for about the time of the Lord's supper.

Luke next proceeds to describe a dispute among the disciples for superiority, and the way in which our Lord settled it. *"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."* We had an account of a similar spirit being displayed by them, in the 9th chapter, from the 46th verse. "Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him

\* Matt. xxvi. 25.

by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me; for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." This account in the 9th chapter of Luke corresponds with what we find in the 18th of Matthew, and the 9th of Mark. We also find another display and reproof of the same ambitious spirit, in the 20th of Matthew, and the 10th of Mark. The mother of Zebedee's children, James and John, had said to Jesus, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." "And when the ten heard it they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The passage in Luke on which we are entering corresponds, in some respects, very closely with this just quoted from Matthew—so closely, indeed, that many consider the occasion to have been the same, and think that Luke introduces the account out of the order of time. Others, however,\* are of opinion that Luke here refers to a different, though similar occasion, the disciples being evidently much given to fall into this spirit. Absolute certainty seems not attainable on this point, nor is it of much importance. If, however, we consider this account by Luke as entered in the chronological order, it discovers the imperfection of the apostles in a very striking way. The solemn services of the passover and Lord's supper, in which they had just been engaged, might be supposed to have banished every proud and worldly imagination; and the humility implied in the question, "Lord, is it I?" could hardly have been expected so soon to give place to vain-glorious and envious ambition. How little is the perfect consistency even of sincere Christians to be calculated on! and how carefully should they watch over their spirit!

It is probable that the disciples were still dreaming that Christ would assume a temporal kingdom, and that thus the subject of their dispute was which of them should hold

\* See Whitby.



the chief offices under him in that earthly reign. But his kingdom was not of this world; it consisted not in meat or drink, or any thing external, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Or, if the apostles had now present to their minds any idea of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, of which they could not have been altogether ignorant at this advanced period of the history, how very foolish, in that view, was the discussion they were holding!

It is important, though obvious, to remark, that if Peter was really intended for that supremacy over the rest of the apostles, and over the whole Church, which the Romish apostasy pretends that he holds, it is quite inconceivable that Christ should not have intimated it on this occasion, when the subject was brought so distinctly before him. But this is to under-rate the force of the argument, for, instead of saying anything to countenance the preposterous idea, he spoke so as utterly to subvert it, and to discourage every claim of supremacy in any of his followers.

*"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles,"* or nations, *"exercise lordship,"* or lord it, *"over them; and they that exercise authority,"* or oppressive authority, *"upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."* The epithet "great" has been given to several kings who were far from deserving it in any commendable sense. They may have been possessed of the commanding qualities of genius, courage, and activity, and may have been raised far above the level of ordinary men in worldly honour and power, and by exterminating victories; but greatness must be judged of according to very different principles, if it be used to signify what God approves and honours. Some have been styled great, who were cruel, and mean, and infamous. Nor can the mere possession of power entitle to this appellation, for power is often used in a tyrannical manner. Some, by being good rulers, and exercising their power for the benefit of their subjects, have, with better reason, obtained this, or some other complimentary title. With regard to the title of "Benefactor," the exact Greek word used by Luke, which is here rendered benefactors,\* was the title of some

\* It is possible that our Lord may have used this one Greek word, *Ευεργετης*, though he was not speaking in Greek; or, he may have used one corresponding to it, and in allusion to it; or, there may be an al-

of the kings of Egypt and Syria, the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ; thus, we read of Ptolemy Euergetes, that is, Ptolemy the Beneficent, or, the Benefactor. "But ye shall not be so." This does not forbid Christians to take public office, and exercise civil authority, as some have strangely asserted. On the contrary, it is often the duty of Christians to come forward in this way; and, were they to decline, they would neglect an opportunity of doing much good, and allow the management of affairs to fall into the hands of unprincipled men, greatly to the injury of the civil and religious interests of the community. The Church and the State, though quite distinct, or different from each other, are not opposed to each other, but capable of rendering each other much service; and the very circumstance of their entire difference renders it easy for them to assist each other in their respective spheres, without any interference of jurisdiction. They have been compared to the soul and the body, which, though different in their nature, harmonize, and are best in union. The State is not put, in Scripture, for the world, in the bad sense of that word, as some seem to suppose; it is not opposed to the Church, nor is it evil in itself. On the contrary, the first duty of the State, in other words, of a nation as such, is to acknowledge God and revelation. Civil power is styled "the ordinance of God;" and the magistrate is called, "the minister of God for good." Well would it be for the world, if all kings were Christians, and, as kings, conducted themselves as Christians. Then kings would indeed be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers, of the Church. Nor do these words of our Lord condemn all ecclesiastical authority, all exercise of Church government; for that would be quite inconsistent with what we elsewhere read: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your-

lusion to the ambiguity of the Hebrew word נָדִיב which signifies both "prince," and "beneficent," as is remarked by Beza and others. There is no such ambiguity, however, in the word employed in the Syriac version. See Doddridge's note. Though an illustration from the Latin cannot be quite in point, the following, from Dr Adam Clarke, is worthy of notice: "It was a custom among the ancient Romans to distribute part of the lands which they had conquered on the frontiers of the empire to their soldiers. Those who enjoyed such lands were called *beneficiarii*, benefited persons; and the lands themselves were called *beneficia*, benefices, as being held on the beneficence of the sovereign: and it is no wonder that such sovereigns, however tyrannical or oppressive they might have been in other respects, were termed *Benefactors* by those who were thus dependent on their bounty."

selves." But, as applicable to the State, these words certainly forbid the tyrannical and oppressive exercise of civil power, the arbitrary and unconstitutional proceedings of rulers, the despotism of autocrats, and usurpers of the rights of men. And, as applicable to the Church, these words forbid, not only what is oppressive, but all proceeding according to men's own absolute will, and not strictly according to the divinely appointed laws of Christ's kingdom. "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy," says the Apostle Paul; and Peter exhorts the elders to take the oversight of the flock of God, "not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."\*

Christ, however, teaches that there is a kind of greatness to be sought by his followers, and describes wherein it consists: "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is elder as he that doth serve." The word "greatest," or greater, as contrasted with "younger,"† may mean elder. We say, for example, James the greater, or elder; and James the less, or younger. It may here be remarked that Peter is thought by many to have been the eldest of the apostles, and that this circumstance alone is enough to account for his being generally named first. The precedence is generally yielded to seniority, where there is an equality as to office and other circumstances. Yet, the elder must not assume, or proudly challenge superiority, else they thereby degrade themselves. Christ teaches his disciples, that if they desire any real superiority, they must seek it by extraordinary zeal and humility, and that they should show mutual deference, and do all they can to assist each other. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder," saith Peter; "yea, all of you be subject one to another."—"Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more," saith Paul. Besides, our Lord here teaches that this is not only the duty, but the dignity and honour, of Christians. Wise, laborious, and condescending usefulness is the test of true excellence. Those who exert themselves most to honour God and benefit men, are most respected by the wise, and most approved by the Lord. Paul was, at once, most pious and diligent, and most lowly; hence, we justly call him "The

\* 2 Cor. i. 24; 1 Pet. v. 2.

† *Μεζωτερος, νεωτερος*. Dr Campbell makes them correspond in the other way thus: "Let the greatest become among you as the smallest."

great apostle of the Gentiles;" and yet he, with unfeigned humility, called himself, "Less than the least of all saints."

"*For whether is greater he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat?*" (certainly that is the usual way of judging) "*but I am among you as he that serveth.*" He conducted himself as the lowliest, though he was, beyond all comparison, the highest. His whole life was laborious, condescending, and kind. He had lately washed his disciples' feet, and said, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you;" and, according to his own words, already quoted, he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He proposes his own example, then, for the imitation of his followers; and, surely, this should be enough to teach them not to strive for precedence, nor affect great dignity—not to "mind high things, but condescend to men of low estate"—to be diligent in doing good to all men, and to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren.

After thus addressing his disciples in the style of reproof, Christ proceeds to give them commendation. "*Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations.*" He had been tempted by Satan, and tried with manifold troubles. He was despised and rejected of men, and he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. True and comfortable it is that "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but" one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" so that he "himself having suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The disciples had come to him notwithstanding all his trials—they had left all and followed him; and though many had gone back, they, with one exception, had remained faithful. It was but little they could do for him, but they did what they could; they stood by him, taking an interest in him and in his cause; and that he here owns as a kindness, and acknowledges as a virtue, though it was the result of his own grace. They had even been deficient in many respects; they had committed many mistakes, manifested much weakness, and fallen into some sins; but he graciously forgives and overlooks all, and bestows on them this commendation. Is it not pleasing to hear him praising them thus? and does it not prove how willing he is to make the best of those

whose hearts are upright before him?\* He had already promised that those who had left all and followed him should receive "manifold more in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting;" and he now describes the privileges and the reward awaiting them, in the following figurative and expressive language:

*"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* The kingdom here spoken of is the kingdom of grace, or, the gospel on earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. The word rendered "appoint,"† signifies to dispose by covenant; so that the clause, "My Father hath appointed unto me," refers to what is commonly called the covenant of redemption; and, in consequence of that covenant, the blessings of salvation are secured, by the covenant of grace, to Christ's people. The kingdom was bestowed on the faithful apostles as private persons; that is, they were saved. It was also appointed to them as apostles, and as inspired men, that they might ministerially give law to Christians. Believers are said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;" and the Church triumphant is thus described: "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."‡ In the sense here intended, Peter is not the only foundation on which the Church is built, for all the apostles are foundations. The honour and happiness to be bestowed on the disciples are here described in language borrowed from the way in which earthly monarchs treat those on whom they wish to bestow peculiar marks of favour. Those who are admitted to eat at his own table by a king, are considered highly favoured, as appears from the treatment of Mephibosheth, and Barzillai's sons, by David.§ Christ's disciples may be said to eat and drink at his table, when they enjoy the blessings of a present salvation—when he thus sups with them, and they with him—when their "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." But this seems also to look forward to the happiness of the other world, when they "shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Our Lord spoke, before, of their sitting on thrones, as we

\* Henry.

† *Διατίθημι*.

‡ Rev. xxi. 14.

§ 2 Sam. ix. 10; 1 Kings ii. 7.

read in Matt. xix. 28: "Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." There seems to be here an allusion to the Jewish courts, in which the chief judge or president sat in the centre, and the rest on each side of him, in the form of a semicircle. The primary and direct reference is also obviously to the apostles and to Israel, or the Jews, as appears from the use of the number twelve. Lightfoot thinks that this throne is to be understood of the judgments Christ was to bring on the Jewish people, and that the sitting of the apostles on thrones with him is to be understood, not of their persons, but of their doctrine, as if he had said, "When I shall bring judgment upon this most unjust nation, then your doctrine, which you have preached in my name, shall judge and condemn them." This is sufficiently natural; yet there seems no necessity for limiting the meaning to this. The words may imply the authority of the apostolic doctrine over the whole Church, figuratively represented by the twelve tribes. In fact, the Gospels and Epistles of the apostles and evangelists are the laws of Christ's kingdom. But this part of the passage is also, probably, intended to carry forward the thoughts to the other world. The kingdom of Christ is begun on earth, but perfected in heaven; it is only in heaven, therefore, that the happiness of his people is complete. The doctrine of the apostles will be the rule of decision in the great day—"In the day," as Paul expresses it, "when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."\* It seems probable that some extraordinary honour awaits the apostles in that day; yet we are informed that this particular kind of honour will not be confined to them; for Paul asks the Corinthian believers, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world; and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? know ye not that we shall judge angels?" This is commonly thought to signify, that after Christ's people are themselves acquitted, they will be as it were, assessors, sitting along with him, witnessing, consenting to, and applauding, the whole of his procedure, and in particular, his sentence of condemnation against the fallen angels and impenitent men. "After these things," says John in the 19th chapter of the Revelation, "I heard

\* Rom. ii. 16.

a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication; and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

In exhortation, founded on the last seven verses, we would say,

1. *Beware of a proudly aspiring and envious spirit.* You may and ought to "seek to excel," and to "press forward to the mark;" but you should not seek your own advancement at the expense of others—you should not seek to rise on the ruins of others, or by trampling on others. Isaiah thus describes the effect of the prevalence of evangelical principles: "The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."—"Let us not," then, "be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

2. *Remember wherein true greatness consists, and follow after it.* There are those who, solely on account of the station they occupy in society, are usually, and in so far, justly, honoured with marks of respect; but there is an honour which wealth cannot purchase, and power cannot command, namely, that which belongs to worthiness of character. Christian greatness consists in high attainments in piety and usefulness. No man who is in a state of sin can be truly great. Surely, the man who is an enemy to God is a base man. Enter, then, on the path of greatness by being reconciled to God through the death of his Son, and by putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. After that, go on in the path of true greatness, by abounding in the work of the Lord. As you are attentive to the duties of religion and benevolence, so do you rise in the general scale of greatness. Nor need the highest in earthly station fear that they will be degraded by such attention; for, this is the way to stand well in the opinion of the wise, and to be approved by Him who saith, "Them that honour me, I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

3. *Whatever your attainments may be, be humble, if you would be great.* However such a man may excel in any department, if he become vain, or proud, he necessarily falls in our estimation. Pride mars all. Vanity is essentially

little. Humility is the inseparable attendant on true greatness. After you have done all, therefore, reckon yourselves unprofitable servants. This is the only way of rising to true dignity. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Once more: *Let the disciples of Christ continue with him, notwithstanding every trial.* It is unlikely that persecution unto death should arise in your day; but, if you live godly in Christ Jesus, you will meet with opposition and various difficulties. Come what may, be steady to him, and he will not overlook you. This may be considered as his language to every one who remains faithful in times and places of peculiar temptation: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." Though others desert the Saviour, do not you desert him. If you think you can secure your peace by forsaking him, you will find yourselves mistaken, for, none but he can now give you rest, because none but he hath the words of eternal life. Continue, then, with him while you live, and when you die he will take you to reign with himself. Remember his own words: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."



## LECTURE CXIX.

LUKE XXII. 31-38.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. 34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.”

IN the careful perusal of the Word of God, which is all written for our admonition, we find encouragement and caution beautifully and instructively blended; so that, when we have found something calculated to keep us from despondency, and to refresh and delight us, we hardly ever proceed much farther without finding something to humble and warn us. All this is designed and contrived, with divine wisdom and grace, to teach us to rejoice with trembling—to form us and keep us to that frame of mind which alone is both happy and safe—that frame in which we shall go on cheerfully, and therefore vigorously, in the way to heaven, and yet not be high-minded, but fear, and thus escape the dangers to which we are exposed. In the last lecture, we found our Lord passing from a reproof of his disciples, for aspiring to dominion over each other, to a high commendation of them, as having adhered to him in all his trials, and to a declaration that he had appointed them a kingdom, and was to take them to sit on thrones with himself. Anon, we find him, in the passage now before us, uttering these admonitory and even startling words: “*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may*

*sift you as wheat.*" It ill became them to be contending for superiority over each other, when Satan was seeking to ruin them all. The repetition of the name, "Simon, Simon," indicated Christ's wish to draw the particular attention of Peter and the other disciples to what he was about to say, and was expressive of great kindness united with a solemn admonition; as in the words, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful;" and, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Satan hath desired to have you." The word \* here rendered "desired," and by supplement, "desired to have" signifies that Satan not only wished, but intimated his wish, that is, asked, or requested to have the apostles in his power, to tempt them. It is also at least implied, if not positively expressed, that this request was granted to a certain extent. Now, of whom could Satan desire, or ask, and obtain permission to tempt the disciples, except of God? This subject cannot be fully explained; but that the leading idea is founded in truth appears from other parts of Scripture, as well as from this. In this view part of the history of Job is very remarkable. "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord; and Satan came also among them."—"Then Satan said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"—"Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord;" and, in some way, by Satan's agency, Job was afflicted with the loss of his wealth, servants, and children. Satan returned and accused him again: "And the Lord said, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils." Very remarkable, too, is this passage in Zechariah: "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." "And the angel of the Lord stood by." Some

\* *Ἐζητήσατο*: *Ἐζήτησα*, posco, deosco, sive ad quæstionem, sive ad certamen, sive ad supplicium. Stockius and Schleusnier.—See Matt. xx. 20; Mark xv. 8; Acts ix. 2, xiii. 28; 1 John v. 15; and Dr Campbell, *in locum*.

think the language of these passages is rather an accommodation to our way of conceiving of things, than a literal representation of what actually took place, and it may be so. As, however, God is everywhere present, holy angels, and such of the fallen angels as are at liberty, may appear before him in various parts of his creation; and, more particularly, as holy angels seem to be present before him in the midst of his worshipping people on earth, when fallen spirits intrude into the same company, it is quite plain that Satan may literally present himself before the Lord, without being admitted into heaven, the habitation of perfect holiness and felicity; and hence, the accounts we have noticed may be descriptions of historical facts, as well as embody the important doctrines, that Satan is the tempter and accuser of men, that he cannot do anything without God's permission, and that God sometimes grants that permission, even with regard to his own people.

Satan had got one of the apostles entirely into his power already, and he now hoped to get some of the rest, perhaps all of them. If anything took place similar to what occurred in Job's case, Satan may have accused the disciples of hypocrisy, covetousness, and worldly ambition, and may have requested permission to try them on some of these grounds, maliciously asserting that their apostasy would then quickly prove that such was their real character. The expression is very strong, he desired to have them, "that he might sift them as wheat." The same figure is employed, though with a different application, in Amos ix. 9. "For, lo," saith the Lord, "I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." That is, the Lord declared that he was to scatter Israel, as a nation, among all the nations of the earth, and to distress them with various agitating calamities, as corn is violently shaken in winnowing, but that the wicked of them alone should perish, and he would preserve all that were valuable and good of them with great care, and keep the nation distinct for restoration to their own land; just as, in the agricultural operation referred to, whatever become of the chaff, the corn is carefully kept. Somewhat similar are the words of the Baptist concerning Christ: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." In the case of

the apostles, Satan hoped to sift and shake them, so as utterly to destroy them; though the Lord determined to support them, and even to overrule the attack for their purification.

We here learn that Satan is under control, and cannot attack any of us without God's knowledge and permission. We read, too, in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, of the old serpent being "bound with a great chain," and "cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up and sealed," and afterwards being "loosed out of his prison." He cannot move against us at all without permission; and when that permission is granted, he cannot go a step beyond it. The Lord confines him altogether, or restrains the remainder of his wrath. Therefore, we need not be filled with any overwhelming dread of him. At the same time, let us here mark, for our own benefit, the alarming facts, that Satan is still the tempter and "the accuser of the brethren," that he still desires to have us that he may sift and agitate us to our ruin, and that permission is sometimes granted to him to make the attempt. Nothing more, indeed, is requisite, in order to this, than God's withdrawing of the positive restraint under which he lays him. As, therefore, we have to "wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," let us take unto us "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Above all, let us take "the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." And, as we have such a contest to maintain, let the consideration enhance in our esteem the work of Him who was manifested for the very purpose of destroying the works of the devil, and lead us to put ourselves under his protection; so shall "the God of peace bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

"But," adds our Lord, "*I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.*" These words lead our thoughts, more immediately, to the intercession which Christ had made for the apostles, and especially for Peter, at the particular time referred to, and then to the intercession he still makes for all his people. What is usually called his intercessory prayer, in the 17th chapter of John, contains many gracious supplications for the stability of his immediate disciples, and of all his chosen people. "Holy Father, keep, through thine

own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”—“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”—“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.” But observe here, that Jesus prays for his people, not only as a body and collectively, but also as individuals, and one by one. “I have prayed for *thee*,” is his language. All his people have many circumstances in common, but every one of them has some circumstances peculiar to himself. Their Lord is intimately acquainted with their several cases and necessities, and not only his prayers but all his regards are particular. He prays and exhorts, and puts forth his power on general grounds, it is true, for the benefit of all his people; but also, on particular grounds, the more exactly to meet the case of each. Let this remind us that true religion is a personal thing; it does not necessarily run through societies, or congregations, or families, but it lays hold on the heart of individuals. This shows the importance, not only of sound doctrine, but of characteristic and discriminative applications of the truth. It reminds us who speak on divine things, to endeavour “rightly to divide the word of truth,” and not to suffer any of you to think you are safe merely because you are externally going along with the people of God. It reminds us to separate you one from another, to strip you of all adventitious circumstances which the deceived may have in common with the upright, and the wavering in common with the steady—to make you stand forward, not, indeed, to the public gaze, but to your own distinct observation—to take you, as it were, one by one, and place you on a spot for examination—to keep you to that spot, and to hold you to the subject of all-important inquiry, till we get you convinced that you have an inalienable personal interest in the matter, and that whatever may be the opinions or the conduct of others, *you* must not put aside the word, but allow it to come home to yourselves, and yield to it an enlightened, a cordial, and a steady obedience. This should also teach every hearer to forget, as it were, that there is any human being concerned but himself, and to apply to himself whatever may suit his own case, with as much care as he could possibly employ if he were the only person present. In reference to our own intercessory prayers, also, the example of our divine Master, in this case, may justly be considered as teaching and encouraging

us to offer up special prayers for particular persons. In conformity with this principle, "when Peter was kept in prison, prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him."\* Paul, too, prayed for Onesiphorus, saying, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day;"† and the same apostle also besought the prayers of the Christians at Rome for himself, mentioning the petitions he wished them to put up: "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."‡

You observe the change of number from the plural to the singular: "Satan hath desired to have *you*," that is, you, all, "that he may sift you;" "but, I have prayed for *thee*." Not that the other ten were excluded from the benefit of Christ's intercession, but Peter stood more in need of it than they, as he was in great danger of apostatizing. They all forsook him and fled, but Peter repeatedly denied him with oaths and curses.

The substance of Christ's prayer for Peter was that his "faith might not fail," that is, might not entirely fail.§ Accordingly, Peter was chargeable with a failure of faith to a great degree, yet not to the degree of its utter destruction. His faith was interrupted as to its exercise, but the principle itself did not cease in his heart. He fell, but he did not fall away. He sinned grievously, but he repented quickly, sincerely, and bitterly. As to any argument in support of the alleged supremacy of Peter, none can legitimately be drawn from this clause. Christ had just exposed every idea of primacy among his followers, and if it was honourable for Peter to be thus particularly prayed for by the Redeemer, it was very humbling for him that he needed it more than his brethren, and surely the prayer, as it referred to him, referred only to his preservation from apostasy while he was on earth, and not to any fancied official existence of his infallible successors—for which dream there is not a shadow of foundation in the Word of God.

But, let us not pass this prayer without dwelling for a

\* Acts xii. 5.

† Rom. xv. 30.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 18.

§ Μη ιηλεισθη.

little on its inseparable connection with the safety of all believers. It is plain, from the quotations from the 17th chapter of John, that his prayer is the same for all his people. He undertakes for them, and prays that their faith shall not fail. With whatever trials they may be beset, and with whatever partial unfaithfulness and temporary backslidings they may be chargeable, they shall not totally and finally apostatize. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Now, this doctrine rests on strong and unmovable grounds. That all believers will persevere to the end, that their faith will not utterly fail, is certain *from their election and predestination by God the Father.* They are "chosen to salvation," and "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Shall, then, God's purpose be frustrated? shall not his counsel stand? and will he not do all his pleasure? It is an unworthy and a weak attempt to evade the obvious meaning of Scripture, to say that God chose his people because he foresaw they would be faithful and holy, and that all that is meant by their predestination to life is, that God has determined to bring them to heaven, provided they persevere in a state of faith and holiness. That they are not chosen because they are faithful and holy, but faithful and holy because they are chosen, and that their predestination to eternal life includes a predestination to all the necessary intermediate steps, such as faith, sanctification, adoption, and perseverance, is most certain from the following passages, if words have any meaning: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."—"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."—"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."\*

This is also certain *from the stability of the well-ordered covenant.* According to this gracious scheme, everything

\* Eph. i. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. viii. 29; John xv. 16.

that is required is provided for and promised, and all the blessings are secured, in due order, and in a way that cannot fail. If his children forsake his law, God says, "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."\* And, as God engages to be faithful to the covenant on his part, so, he thus graciously provides for the faithfulness of his people on theirs: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."†

This doctrine may also be inferred *from the joy which is in heaven over the true penitent*. Every instance of this repentance causes immediate joy to the angels, more joy than that which they feel over those who have already undergone a saving change.‡ But, could it possibly be so, if, after true repentance, men might so fall away as to be lost for ever? All the joy which the angels could have on a man's conversion, on that supposition, would only be a slight satisfaction that his case was, in so far, promising; there might be room for an uncertain hope—there could be no ground for triumphant joy. The angels know better; they know the unchanging nature of God's special love, and the value of the first decided turning of a soul to him; they foresee the issue, and, therefore, their joy is not deferred.

The continuance of all believers, on the whole, in the faith and obedience of Christ, is farther certain *from the work of the Holy Spirit*. He begins, and he carries on, the work of their salvation. The continuance of his influence is expressly promised: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."§ The Comforter is promised to abide with Christ's people for ever; and his presence is the pledge of their safety. "In whom also, after that ye believed," writes Paul to the Ephesians, "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the ear-

\* Ps. lxxxix. 30.

† Luke xv. 7.

‡ Jer. xxxii. 40.

§ Isa. lix. 21.



nest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." And, in the words of the same apostle to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you," "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The same conclusion must be drawn from every scriptural view that can be taken of *the office of the Saviour*. His people were given to him to be saved; and will he not fulfil the charge? He has fulfilled the law in their room, and bought them with his blood; and will he not secure them for himself? Does not his death guarantee their happiness? Is not his glorious and happy resurrection a pattern and pledge of theirs? And, as this passage more directly teaches, is he not acting as their intercessor? and shall not his intercession be successful? Shall his declaration be falsified in any case, or his prayer not prevail, whom "the Father heareth always?"

Add to all this a great variety of other express declarations of Scripture, such as the following: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."—"Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life."—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand."

Against such a mass of positive evidence as this, any objections which can be stated must be of no weight. What though there are many conditional promises to believers, that is, promises of the continuance of the divine favour, provided they continue believing and obedient? Are there not also many positive promises made to them? and when a conditional promise is placed by the side of a positive promise, are we to suppose that the former invalidates the latter? We are to hold them both as true. The positive promise will certainly be fulfilled. And as to the conditional, it harmonizes exactly with the other, both because it is the fact that only the faithful are saved, and also, because the conditions required of those who are in a state of grace, if conditions they must be called, are included as part of the positive promise. As to the passages which speak of professors falling away—they are either descriptive of hypo-

crites, or are spoken hypothetically; that is, in the way of supposition, with the view of putting professors on their guard. That the Lord employs cautions, exhortations, and threatenings, only proves that he treats his people as reasonable beings, and not as machines; for these are the very means which, in conformity with their rational nature, are adapted to keep them steady, and which, by his grace, are rendered effectual for that purpose. As for the cases of apostasy which have actually occurred, they are all cases of persons who had the form without the power of godliness, who assumed the profession and appearance of religion, without having ever been brought to faith in Christ, and newness of heart; and they are accounted for in perfect consistency with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in this passage of John:\* "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." As to the objection that this doctrine is an encouragement to carelessness and sin, it never can be so, if rightly understood, seeing it implies perseverance in a state of faith and holiness, as well as perseverance in a state of acceptance. But, though this doctrine may be misunderstood and abused by some, so is every other doctrine; and that by no means proves that it is false, or that it should not be taught, or that it is not calculated to do good. Rightly understood, this doctrine is most honourable to God, as showing his unchanging love, and most profitable to men, as demonstrating the vast importance of a decided impression being made on the mind at first, as a great support under trouble, and as affording a strong encouragement to exertion by the certainty of success. Let us guard against the abuse, but let us not neglect the use of this, or of any other doctrine of grace. Who says that peace is not desirable, because there is such a thing as false peace? Who says that courage is not commendable, because the rashness of some prompts them to rush on destruction? Shall a reviving cordial be withheld from him who is ready to faint, because another man may possibly intoxicate himself with it? Is it usual, or would it be right, to keep back good news from those whom they concern, because others may possibly rejoice in them who have no reason to do so? Does one man put out his own eyes, because another sees double?

\* 1 John ii. 19.

or, would it be better for us all that the light of day were for ever darkened, because, abused as it is by some transgressors, it lights them on the way to ruin?

But to proceed: Our Lord says, farther, to Peter, "*And, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*"\* "When thou art converted," that is, when thou art returned to a sense of duty, when thou art restored, and hast repented. Peter was, doubtless, a true convert before the time here referred to. He had forsaken all and followed Christ; and he had expressed himself so well, that Jesus had said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Therefore, strictly speaking, he did not need to undergo, and could not undergo, that radical change of state and heart which the word conversion is most usually employed to denote; and yet, he did need repentance and forgiveness for the sin he afterwards contracted. In this view, and spiritually interpreted, the words of Jesus to Peter, on another occasion,<sup>†</sup> are very instructive: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" yet, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Whenever believers sin, there must be a renewed application by faith for pardon, and a renewed exercise of the grace of repentance. It is here supposed and foretold (as actually took place), that Peter was to be guilty of a heinous offence, and also, that as he would then need, so he would be enabled to repent and return to the Lord. Christ enjoins him, when he should be thus restored, to "strengthen," to do everything in his power to confirm in the belief and obedience of the gospel, his fellow-Christians, here beautifully designated as his "brethren." Accordingly, after his restoration, Peter was not only very faithful himself, but very studious to encourage professing Christians to remain faithful in the midst of every trial. Of this the following sentences from his two epistles furnish full and pleasing proof: "Gird up the loins of your mind;

\* Elsner is for translating this clause, thus: "Igitur et tu converte aliquando et confirma fratres tuos"—"Therefore, do thou also afterwards convert and strengthen thy brethren," rendering the word *ισχυρις* transitively, as in Luke i. 16, 17; James v. 19, 20. But, our own version seems preferable, in which the word is rendered intransitively, as in most other places. See Matt. xiii. 15; Acts iii. 19, ix. 35, xi. 21; 1 Thess. i. 9, &c. The word should have been rendered intransitively in Acts xxvi. 18, the article *σου*, though not before *ανοιξαι*, being before both *ισχυρις*, and *λαλειν*: "To open their eyes that they may turn," &c.

† John xiii. 8.

be sober, and hope to the end.”—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”—“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.”—“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—“The God of all grace,” “after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you.”—“Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Now, here, the command of Christ, and the corresponding obedience of Peter, should be considered as furnishing all Christians, especially those who have been restored from backsliding, with a rule and an example, to encourage and warn the afflicted, the fearful, the tempted, and the fallen. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit,” said the Psalmist;\* “then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

Notwithstanding the kind and faithful warning he had received, Peter thought himself in no danger. Not aware of his own weakness, and full of self-confidence, “*He said unto Jesus, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.*” There is no doubt that Peter was strongly attached to the Saviour, and that he made this declaration sincerely. We know, too, that the time at last arrived when he actually did go both to prison and to death, though not exactly with Christ, yet for his sake. But that time was at a considerable distance, and he was not yet prepared for such a trial. The result soon painfully demonstrated his weakness, and the folly of his boasting. It is to be remembered that Jesus also warned all his disciples, that they would desert him, and that they all made similar protestations with Peter that they would not prove unfaithful, to whatever dangers they might be exposed. “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night;” and when Peter had said, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,” it is added, “Likewise also said all the disciples.”† It is right that we should feel a horror at the thought of deserting the Saviour; and circumstances sometimes occur which call for a declaration of the feeling, and an expression of a corresponding resolu-

\* Ps. li. 12; see also Isa. xxxv. 3, 4.

† Matt. xxvi. 31-35.

tion of faithfulness, provided we preserve due humility of soul. Thus, Paul said, "Bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me."—"I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." But it is too common for men to make strong protestations of fidelity—too common to say, with the Israelites of old, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient,"—without considering their own weakness. Nor is it to be forgotten, that many a man has been guilty of that of which he once thought himself incapable, and with regard to which he would have said with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Let us never forget that he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool; and let the language of each of us be, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—"O keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee."

Our blessed Saviour is better acquainted with us than we are with ourselves. He knows where our weakness lies, and foresees our failures. He foresaw and foretold the fall of Peter. "*And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*" But we shall reserve all explanation of this verse till we come (if it please God) to the subsequent part of the chapter, in which the fulfilment throws light on the prediction.

At the 35th verse our Lord enters on a different subject. "*And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse*" wherein to carry money, "*and scrip,*" or bag for carrying provisions, or other articles, "*and shoes,*" except the sandals on your feet, "*lacked ye anything?*" This refers to the directions given to the apostles, when they were sent out to preach and to work miracles, according to the account at the beginning of the 9th chapter, which was formerly explained.\* Similar instructions were also given to the seventy, in the 10th chapter, and this reason was assigned—"The labourer is worthy of his hire." In reply to our Lord's question the apostles declared, that, though they had exactly followed his directions in making no provision for that journey, they had lacked "*nothing.*" A kind Providence had accompanied them, and opened the hearts of those among whom they had sojourned, to supply them with

\* See Lecture xliv.

everything they needed. It will be useful to us to reflect on our past history. In doing so, we shall find many causes of thankfulness to the Lord for having graciously provided and cared for us. Jacob called God, "the God that fed him all his life long to that day." And Moses said to Israel, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."\* From all this experience of ourselves and others, let us learn still to trust in Providence, when we are in the way of duty. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

"Then said he unto them, *But now, he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.*" On the former occasion their journey was to be short, and they were to be kindly treated; but now, they were entering on a long and arduous struggle, and were to be treated unkindly, and exposed to great danger; therefore, they were now to provide themselves with necessaries, and, as we say, to be well armed for what was coming. As to the words, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one," or make every exertion to procure one, and even sell his mantle, or upper garment, rather than want one: It is possible, that, foreseeing the opportunity for his working a healing miracle which would thence arise, Christ may have wished his disciples to take some weapons with them. The words, however, rather seem to have been spoken, not exactly as commanding this, but in order to convey a strong impression of the urgency and danger of the case. The hour was now so late, and the scenes of Gethsemane were so near, that there could scarcely have been opportunity or time, literally to go to sell and buy. This is very generally thought, therefore, to have been a proverbial expression, signifying the approach of great trials and perils; as if one

\* Deut. viii. 2, 3.

were to say, Now is the time to be prepared for the worst. Another idea is, that, in the animated language of prophecy, Christ here utters a prediction in the form of a command; as when Isaiah foretells the destruction of the king of Babylon's family, by saying, "Prepare slaughter for his children," and Jeremiah the lamentable desolation of Zion, in these words, "Call for the mourning women," "and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us."\* Or, perhaps, this is a command but to be figuratively understood, and applied to spiritual, not carnal weapons. "This whole speech is allegorical," says Beza. "My fellow-soldiers, you have hitherto lived in peace, but now a dreadful war is at hand; so that, omitting all other things, you must think only of arms. But when he prayed in the garden, and reproved Peter for smiting with the sword, he himself showed what those arms were."

*"For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end."* The prophecy quoted is in the well-known 53d chapter of Isaiah: "And he was numbered with the transgressors." This refers both to his being crucified with two malefactors, and to his being treated as a sinner, when he suffered the punishment of sin imputed to him. "This must be accomplished," for the Scriptures cannot be broken. It yet remained to be accomplished, and it was to be accomplished soon. "For the things concerning me have an end." As if he had said, My trials are drawing to a close, but yours are only beginning. You must expect bad treatment when you proceed to proclaim salvation through one who was crucified as a malefactor. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. For this reason I admonish you to be prepared for what is coming.†

*"And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords."* It has been remarked‡ that it was usual for travellers, in those parts of the world, to carry weapons for defence against "perils of robbers," and that it is probable the disciples brought these swords along with them in the journey they had lately made from Galilee to Jerusalem. At all events, they had them with them, or close within their reach, at this time. They showed Jesus these two weapons, intimating, no doubt, that they were ready to use them in his

\* This is Dr Campbell's opinion.—Isa. xiv. 21; Jer. ix. 17.

† See Doddridge.

‡ Cradock's Harmony.

defence, and would go for more swords, if he wished it. They understood him literally, and thought that he wished them to fight. On this, whatever may have been the mistakes under which they laboured, and whatever may have been the exact meaning of what he had spoken before, without explaining himself farther at the time, "*He said unto them, It is enough.*" Two swords were not enough to arm eleven men; nor were they by any means enough for defence against the multitude, according to men's usual way of judging; but they were enough for Christ's purpose—enough to answer the design of a symbolical warning of the approaching danger. His being satisfied with two swords was, of itself, a clear proof that he by no means intended to offer any resistance himself, or to encourage his followers to do so, but that he willingly yielded himself up to be put to death, according to his own declaration: "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep:" "no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." All this will more fully appear when we come to consider the use which Peter made of one of the swords, and what our Lord did and said in consequence of that rash action. In the meantime, may the Lord bless what has now been spoken; and to his name be praise. Amen.



## LECTURE CXX.

## LUKE XXII. 39-46.

"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42. Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. 43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44. And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

WHAT an affecting and amazing passage is this! With the sole exception of his crucifixion, there is no part of the evangelical history which gives so striking a view of the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, or so plain an intimation that there was something altogether peculiar in their nature, and cause, and end. In proceeding to examine this mysterious subject, it is not without fear and trembling that we should venture to tread on this holy ground; and yet, the inquiry is as inviting as it is solemn. In approaching it, we may well say, with Moses, when he beheld the burning bush in the remote solitude of the desert, "We will now turn aside and see this great sight."

You will remember, that, immediately after the account of the Lord's supper, as given by Matthew and Mark, it is added, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Various things, however, were said after the supper, by our Lord, either before they left Jerusalem, or when they were on the way from it, some of which we have considered in following out those parts of the history which are given by Luke. In the first verse of the passage now under review, we read, "*And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.*" We formerly found that Jesus retired to spend the nights of the passion-week at Bethany,

which was situated towards the bottom of the Mount of Olives, fifteen furlongs, that is, nearly two miles, from Jerusalem.\* In the parallel passages of Matthew and Mark, both of whom relate the circumstances of Christ's agony in the garden,† it is said that Jesus and his disciples now "came to a place called Gethsemane." The evangelist John does not give an account of the agony, probably because it was already so distinctly described by the other three who had written before him: he says, however, at the beginning of his 18th chapter, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples, over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." Cedron was a brook, that is, a winter stream,‡ in which very little water ran except in the wintry or rainy season. It passed through the valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. It was named from a word signifying black,|| or dark, either from the colour of its water, or from the dark valley through which it flowed. It is repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament. One of these occasions demands notice here, namely, that on which David was compelled to flee by the rebellion of Absalom, who had engaged his counsellor, Ahithophel, against him: "All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over; the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over towards the way of the wilderness."§ This circumstance in the history of David, who was, unquestionably, in many respects, a type of Christ, may be considered as a figure of what now occurred to the second David, through the treachery of Judas, and the violence of his enemies, though a party of faithful friends still accompanied him.

The exact spot, then, to which they came was Gethsemane, which was a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, not far from Bethany. The word Gethsemane signifies the press of oil, or, the vale of oil, or, of fatness. Thither our Lord frequently resorted with his disciples, and thither he now went, accompanied by the eleven; Judas, one of the apostles, having, by this time, "gone to his own

\* Luke xxi. 37; Mark xi. 11.

† Matt. xxvi. 36; Mark xiv. 32.

‡ *Κισιμαρρίου*.

|| *Του* and not *του* *Κιδρὸν* seems to be the true reading, and the derivation not from the Greek word for cedars, but from the Hebrew word *קדר*.

§ 2 Sam. xv. 23.

place." According to Matthew, Jesus now said to the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee," (in Mark, "James and John.") That is, when they had entered into the garden, he directed eight of the disciples to remain near the entrance, and went forward with the three just mentioned. These were the three who were permitted to witness the miracles of the restoration of Jairus' daughter to life, and our Lord's transfiguration on the mount,\* which would prepare them for witnessing his agony, and, together with the remembrance of that awful scene, fortify them for the trials which they were personally to undergo, and the services they were to render. James was soon beheaded by Herod. Peter was one of the most honoured instruments for diffusing the gospel, especially among those of the circumcision; and he, too, suffered martyrdom. John was an eminently attached and faithful servant of Christ; and, if he did not suffer persecution to death, he underwent many afflictions for the name of Jesus, and survived all the rest of the apostles, to bear witness to these events in his Master's history. So it generally happens that more than ordinary manifestations of the Redeemer's glory and grace are vouchsafed to those who have more than ordinary sufferings, or services, before them.

Verse 40: "*And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*" It does not seem quite certain whether he addressed these words to the eight, or to the three, nor is it of much importance to determine, as they must have been equally suitable to both parties. He directed them to pray that they might be altogether kept from temptation, or upheld under it, so that they might not fall from their stedfastness. This injunction furnishes a rule for Christians in all similar cases; it teaches us to have recourse to prayer: and our Lord himself furnishes us with the very words, in the well known petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When coming enticements, or terrors, expose us to the danger of acting inconsistently, let us spread out our case before the Lord, and the best results will follow. In the very act of sincere prayer, we shall be sensible of our own weakness, we shall exercise dependence on divine strength, and we shall obtain the promised aid of Him who hath said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble,

\* Mark v. 37; Luke ix. 28.

and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." If we are thus cautious, and prayerful, Christ will uphold us, as may be inferred from his words to the Church in Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Matthew says that, having taken with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, Jesus "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." He *began* to be sorrowful, as if he had never endured any sorrow before. During the whole of his life, he was more or less afflicted—he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" but all the sorrow he had hitherto felt was little in comparison of what was now settling down on him. It is added, in Matthew, "Then said he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." We shall consider the cause of this sorrow afterwards; but mark here, how very strong the words are in which his sorrow is described. His soul was "exceeding sorrowful,"\* surrounded with sorrow on every side. And his sorrow was so acute, that it was almost impossible for him to live. It was a deadly anguish—it was an anguish that actually continued till he died. Having thus described the bitterness of his sorrow, Jesus said to the three disciples,† "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." He directed them to watch, as well as to pray. Caution on our part is necessary, as well as prayer to God. The precept by Peter is this, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." "Tarry ye here," said our Lord. Something similar to this occurred when Moses went up into the mount;‡ the seventy elders accompanied him a certain way; then he went on with Joshua, having said to the elders, "Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you," and then he left even Joshua, and ascended to the top of the mount alone. Jesus left Peter, James, and John, and advanced by himself to a still more retired part of the garden. According to Matthew, "He went a little farther;" according to Luke, "*He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast.*" Deep grief cannot bear the prying eyes of strangers; and ardent devotion loves to retire, even from the presence of the dearest friends. Christ, as to his humanity, needed to pray for himself; as Mediator, he prayed for his people; and as our pattern, he set us an example of the duty of prayer. The postures he assumed were very solemn: Luke says, "*He kneeled down*

\* *Περίλυτος.*

† Matt. xxvi. 38.

‡ Exod. xxiv.

*and prayed;*" Matthew says, "He fell on his face and prayed." He used both these postures, probably, first kneeling down, and then falling on his face. Different positions of body may be used in prayer. When persons are weak, and unable to go into any other posture, or cannot do so with any propriety, or convenience, they may pray sitting, or even lying. "Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat under a juniper-tree; and said, It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers."\* When Nathan, the prophet, made known to David God's gracious purpose to establish his throne for ever, "then went king David in, and sat before the Lord," and offered a long prayer of thanksgiving and supplication.† Many an earnest and acceptable prayer has been offered on the bed of sickness. Standing and kneeling are the two most common postures of prayer. At the dedication of the temple,‡ Solomon prayed "kneeling, and with his hands spread up to heaven," while "all the congregation of Israel stood;" then he stood up, and pronounced a long blessing on the people. "When ye stand praying," says our Lord, "forgive, if ye have ought to be forgiven." "O come, let us worship and bow down," says the Psalmist; "let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Stephen "kneeled down, and prayed." Prostration, or falling on the face, or on the ground, has been considered as the humblest of all postures, and has been used only on occasions of uncommon urgency and solemnity. When God threatened to destroy Israel, after the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces," and made earnest intercession. When the angel of the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem, after the numbering of the people, David and the elders "fell upon their faces, and the king prayed for mercy."§ In truth, it is not the posture of the body which is to be considered, so much as the frame of the mind; and yet, it is proper to employ those postures which, whether from nature or custom, are considered expressive of inward devotional feeling. What importunity did the postures which our Lord now adopted manifest! and how amazing to think of the kneeling and prostration of Him at whose name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess!

Let us now consider the prayer itself. "*He prayed,*

\* 1 Kings xix. 4.  
† 2 Sam. vii. 18.

‡ 1 Kings viii.  
§ Numb. xvi. 22; 1 Chron. xxi. 16.

*saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*" He addresses the Father by the appellation of *his* Father. In respect of his human nature, he was his Father, as well as the Father of all, by creation; yet, there was a peculiar sense in which, even as to his human nature, he was his Father, namely, in respect of his miraculous conception. But he is his Father in a far higher sense—that of his divine and eternal sonship, by which he is of the same nature with the Father. In this address, there was one fulfilment of the words which had a typical reference, in a far lower sense, to David, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation; also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." Amidst all his sufferings, Jesus had still the consciousness that God was his Father; and, as the Son of God, he could not but be loved by him, whatever he might undergo for us. Here, too, Jesus is our example, teaching us to cry, *Abba, Father.* The figurative use of the word "cup" probably originated in the custom of a father of a family, or master of a feast, sending to his children, or his guests, a cup of such drink as he intended for them. But, as a cup may contain liquor either pleasant or bitter, wholesome or noxious, the word comes to be put for a portion of any kind, whether of comfort or of affliction. It is sometimes put for prosperity and happiness, as when the Psalmist says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot;" "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." More frequently, it is put for affliction, as when it is said, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."—"In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same, but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them." In some cases, though not, probably, in that before us, this form of expression may allude to an ancient method of capital punishment, by making the condemned person drink a cup of poison. Thus, Socrates was adjudged, by the magistrates of Athens, to drink a cup of the juice of hemlock. The expression, in Heb. ii. 9, that Jesus "should *taste* death for every man," seems to refer to this figure of a cup. Christ prayed his Father to remove the cup from

him; that is, to relieve him from his present distress, and to save him from the death which threatened him. According to Mark, he prayed that "the hour might pass" from him, the hour and power of darkness and suffering. He qualified this prayer, however, by a reference to the will of his Father. This desire for relief was the natural and sinless desire of suffering humanity. His suffering, in itself, could not have been joyous, but must have been grievous, else it would have been no suffering at all. Christ, being truly a man, felt and prayed as such. But there was no sin, nor contradiction in his prayer, qualified, as it was, by the words, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Matthew tells us that Jesus also said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." A thing may be possible in itself, as not implying any contradiction, and yet, it may be impossible because of circumstances. And so it was here; viewed apart from everything else, there does not appear to have been any impossibility in Christ's deliverance; and yet, viewed in all its bearings, it could not be. The covenant of redemption was fixed, and included his death; the prophecies required it, and sinners could not be saved without it; for these reasons, it was not possible that the cup should pass from him. Indeed, his language does not imply that he thought the cup might pass from him, but is merely expressive of great dread, and earnest desire. Here, too, Jesus sets us an example that we should follow his steps. If we are afflicted, let us pray for relief, yet not without submission to our heavenly Father's will.

On another occasion,\* "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always." Accordingly, Luke informs us of one way in which Jesus' prayer, at this time, was answered. "*There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*" The cup was not removed; but an angel was sent to succour him. As to his divine nature, he did not need any strengthening, nor could any creature, however exalted, have been of any use to him. It is to his humanity, then, that this clause must be applied. In this respect, he was made lower than the angels, and might be helped by their ministrations. We are not informed, nor can we positively affirm, as to the particular way in which the angel now strengthened him. He might help him, though not efficaciously as God helps, yet instru-

\* John xi. 41.

mentally. He might sympathize with him; he might unite with him in speaking of the glorious issue of his sufferings; he might raise him up from the ground, and wipe off his sweat and tears; and he might worship him. And, though he could not efficaciously relieve his mind, God himself would do so. He who sent the messenger would bless the message. Now the promise to Messiah was fulfilled,\* "Mine arm also shall strengthen him." The Lord heard him in the day of trouble; he sent him help from the sanctuary, and strengthened him out of Zion.

Let this circumstance instruct and encourage us. If we ask, we shall receive. A gracious answer will be given to us, though, perhaps, not exactly in our own way. The Lord may employ the instrumentality of angels, or of human beings,† or may work more directly on our minds by his Holy Spirit. When we apply to him, in the time of trouble, if he do not remove the trial, he will strengthen us to bear it, and that will be enough. "In the day when I cried," says the Psalmist, "thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

We learn, from Matthew and Mark, that when Jesus returned to the three disciples, "he found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" Considering his express command to watch and pray, and his deep distress, this drowsiness betrayed a sinful indifference, both to his will and to his sufferings. It, doubtless, also occasioned a loss to themselves. It is reasonable to suppose that, though they were at some little distance from him, they were within hearing, and (it being full moon about the time of the passover) within sight of him; but, owing partly to the distance, and partly to their being asleep for a part of the time, it is uncertain how much they heard and saw of what is related of this remarkable season. Doubtless, the three first evangelists, besides being informed by the disciples now present, were guided by the Holy Ghost to commit to writing all the particulars which infinite wisdom saw fit to be handed down to us. Had Peter, James, and John, however, remained awake all the time, they would have heard and seen more for their own edification. Christ, therefore, rebuked them; but he rebuked them gently, and he even apologized for them, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Let us strive against drowsiness and listlessness when we

\* Ps. lxxxix. 21. † Dan. x. 8-12; Luke xxii. 32; 2 Cor. xii. 9.



ought to be all attention. Yet, let us not despond because of infirmities, though we ought to be humbled. There is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds; and sometimes our bodies cannot keep up with the desires of our souls. May He who knows our frame pity and pardon us, and revive and quicken us by his grace.

The other two evangelists state that Jesus went away the second time, and prayed again, "saying the same words," or, praying to the same purpose, though his supplication now, as given by Matthew, seems to have the spirit of acquiescence in the divine will more decidedly expressed than before. "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Then it is added, also by Matthew, "And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy."

Let us now consider that most affecting part of the description given by Luke in the 44th verse: "*And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*" The word "agony" is very expressive. It signifies a wrestling, a struggle, a vehement anguish, all the arduous exertion of body and painful anxiety of mind accompanying any fight, or dreadful, or deeply interesting contest. A closely allied word is used by the apostle Paul, when he says to the Philippians, "Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in his name, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same *conflict* which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me:" and to the Colossians, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you."\* But, no agony was ever to be compared with this of our Lord. It was a most dreadful struggle with sorrow and terror. It is in vain, however, to attempt to describe this conflict. There was no coldness in his prayers before, but now their fervour increased. So, we should be especially earnest in prayer, when the call to it is especially urgent. The words in the Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 7), appear to refer chiefly to this part of our Lord's history: "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Though he suffered, his prayer was heard notwithstanding: it was heard in the visit

\* Phil. i. 30; Col. ii. 1.

of the angel, in the composure of his mind, in his being sustained during his sorrows, in the finishing of his work, and in the acceptance of his sacrifice. Though he died, he was saved from death; for, he did not remain under its power, but rose victorious, to live and reign for ever.

It has been made a question whether the sweat here described was really a bloody sweat, as to its matter, or not. The question, though somewhat interesting, is not of great importance, as, on either supposition, the circumstance would, more or less, indicate the greatness of the suffering endured. Some think that this was not, strictly speaking, a sweat of blood, but only a very profuse sweat, which fell as blood would fall; and they rest their opinion partly on what they consider as the likelihood of the case, and partly on its being said that his sweat was *as it were* great drops of blood, but not positively that it was blood. It is true that the expression, "as it were," like the word so rendered, most commonly signifies only likeness; and it is true that extreme grief and terror sometimes occasion a profuse cold sweat.\* The more common opinion, however, has been, that this was really a sweat of blood; that the anguish and perturbation of our Lord's mind forced the blood (mixed probably with sweat) through the pores of his skin, so that it fell down to the ground in large drops, or clots. In support of this opinion, it has been remarked, that the word "as," or the expression, "as it were," like the corresponding Greek word,† does not always signify similarity, but often reality, as in the following passages: "They counted John as a prophet"—"Their words seemed to them as idle tales"—"We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father"—"We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡ It has been remarked, also, that it is not said that his sweat was as it were blood, but, as it were great drops, or clots, of blood falling down to the ground; the two words "clots" and "falling" agreeing in construction, thus implying that his sweat was blood, and even like clots of blood. And finally, it has been observed that other cases somewhat similar are recorded. The Stagyrice says, "Some have sweated a bloody sweat."§ Diodorus Siculus says, of

\* "Tum gelidus toto manabat corpore sudor."—*Æneid*, iii. 175.

† *ὡς*.

‡ Matt. xiv. 5; Luke xxiv. 11; John i. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

§ *Τινες ιδίαν αἱματωδὴν ἰδρωτα*.—*Hist. Antion.* iii. 19.

certain serpents, "Their bites occasion most painful deaths: dreadful pains torment the person stung, and a flowing of blood-like sweat seizes him."\* Mention is made of a man at Lyons, who, on hearing the sentence of death pronounced against him, was covered all over with a bloody sweat.† An eminent physician says "that it sometimes happens that, from great mental fervour, or pressure, the pores are so dilated, that even blood issues from them, and there happens a bloody sweat."‡ Hence, it is thought that there is good reason to believe that what is here described by Luke was, strictly speaking, a bloody sweat. And what an idea does this convey of the agony of the Saviour's mind! How great must have been the mental perturbation which produced such an effect on Jesus, who was in health, and during the cool of night! What a proof is there here of the extraordinary nature of his sufferings! What an affecting spectacle, to behold the Son of God prostrate on the ground, his soul in agony and torture, and his body besmeared with dust, and tears, and sweat, and blood!

"*And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow.*" Generally speaking, grief tends to keep people from sleeping.§ Yet, very heavy and long continued sorrow exhausts the spirits, and makes men very dull and heavy. Let us beware of cherishing, even in the heaviest sorrows, a spirit of excessive depression, lest we fall into a state of complete prostration, listlessness, and inactivity, and become incapable of receiving, or of doing, any good. Let us endeavour to preserve equanimity in trouble, and the peace of God in the midst of events which cannot but cause us pain; thus, the joy of the Lord will be our strength.

\* *Kai juvis idwros aimatoudous karixi.*—Lib. xvii. This seems to signify that the sweat was of the colour of blood.

† Gerhards Harm, pars i. See also Turretin De satisfactione; and Pearce, quoting from Thuanus.

‡ "Contingere interdum, poros ex multo aut fervido spiritu adeo dilatari, ut etiam exeat sanguis per eos, fiatque sudor sanguineus."—Dr Mead from Galen; Boyle's *Natural Philosophy*.

"Sic omnia membra —

Emisere simul rutilum pro sanguine virus.

Sanguis erant lacrymæ —

— totum est pro vulnere corpus."—*Lucan*, ix. 812, &c.

§ As in the well-known and beautiful words of Young:—

"Tir'd nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!

He, like the world, his ready visit pays

Where fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes;

Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,

And lights on lids unsullied with a tear."

"And" Jesus "said unto them, *Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*" We have already seen how he expostulated with his disciples on their drowsiness, and exhorted them to watchfulness and prayer; and the outline of the history is plain, though it does not appear quite certain with what part of the account by the other evangelists this clause corresponds in point of time. According to them, our Lord said to the disciples, when he found them asleep the third time, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." Some think that saying should be rendered interrogatively, so as to correspond with the question in Luke, "Why sleep ye?" But, taking it as it is in our version, it is probably to be understood ironically, as if he had said, "All I could say to keep you awake has been in vain; the need for such an exhortation is now at an end, and I urge you not to watch any longer. Sleep on now, and take your rest, if you can, and if you dare. You will now be roused by other means." This view is confirmed by what immediately follows in Matthew: "Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

The doctrinal and practical lessons in the minor points of this history having been already noticed, it only remains to consider seriously the *chief cause* of our Saviour's agony in the garden, and the more direct *inferences* from it. As to its cause, everything like the feeling of a guilty conscience, evil passion, and the fear of failure, must be entirely excluded from our ideas. Some circumstances may have contributed, in some degree, to his agony, which, however, are by no means altogether sufficient to account for it. For example, he may have been assaulted by Satan; but he had been subjected to that before, without manifesting any such perturbation. The foresight, too, of his cruel death may justly be considered as one of the ingredients in his agony. But, if this was all, he showed less strength of mind than many of his followers who were not moved by such terror, but went cheerfully and joyfully forward, and triumphed in the midst of cruelties and martyrdom. What then could lead him to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?" What threw him into such an agony, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground?" There must have been some ingredient in his cup, which was not in theirs. There must have been

some cause operating in his case, and not in theirs. And what could that have been but *the pressure of divine wrath*?\* Already, that hiding of his Father's countenance had begun, which made him exclaim on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The hand of God lay heavy on his soul. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief."

From this, we infer the truth of *the doctrine of the atonement*. Suffering, in any degree, is the consequence of guilt. It is true that we see many of the best of men in trouble; but no mere man is absolutely sinless, and it is agreeable both to reason and Scripture that no completely innocent person should suffer. Now, here we find Jesus suffering; but where was his sin? "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." There is no way of reconciling these two facts of his personal sinlessness and his suffering, but on the supposition that "he was made sin for us." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." This must have been the case, in order to his suffering at all. But, when we consider the dreadful and unparalleled nature of his sufferings, and the amazing way in which his agony was expressed, this truth becomes still more manifest. Here we have a perfectly holy person subjected to the heaviest sorrow—a person of the highest dignity and the strongest mind moved and speaking in a way to which his feeble disciples were superior. We repeat it—the martyrs underwent the most shocking tortures, not only with patience, but with joy. "None of these things moved them." Scourges, wild beasts, swords, crosses and flames, they beheld and endured without dismay. They did not shrink back; but they went forward to suffering, as to happiness and triumph, and they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Surely, he was not more timid than they. There must have been something pressing on him from which they were free—and that was just the punishment of sin. The martyrs were numbered with the righteous; but Jesus "was numbered with the transgressors." The martyrs enjoyed the comforting presence of God; but Jesus felt no consolation. In a word, the martyrs suffered only from the hands of *men*; but Jesus was "stricken, smitten of *God*, and afflicted."—"He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

\* It is surprising that some commentators question this, who profess to hold the doctrine of the atonement.

Hence, too, we may infer *the evil of sin*. The Lord is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look on it but with abhorrence. Nothing is so opposite to his nature. It is the abominable thing which he hates. His displeasure against it has been manifested in many striking ways. On account of sin, he banished the rebellious angels from heaven, who are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. On account of sin, he drove man out of paradise, sent death into the world and all our woes, overwhelmed the old world by the deluge, destroyed with fire and brimstone the cities of the plain, and scattered his chosen nation, and made them a hissing and a proverb among men. Terrible, however, as these examples are, they are nothing to that which is exhibited in the sufferings of the Son of God for sin imputed. That the wicked themselves should suffer was not so very surprising; but, that the immaculate and divine Redeemer should suffer, was wonderful indeed. No more convincing proof of the evil of sin could possibly be given than this, rather than that it should pass unpunished, God's eternal Son was brought to agony, and, at last, to the dust of death. When the infinite dignity and spotless innocence of the Saviour are considered, his agony, as one great part of his expiatory sufferings, gives a more striking display of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," than would have been given though the whole fallen race of man had been doomed to endless ruin. You, then, who make a mock at sin, who talk lightly of it, and who tremble not at its consequences, reflect on the sorrows of the Redeemer; accompany him, in thought, to the garden of Gethsemane; consider his mournful cries, his supplications, his tears, his agony, and his bloody sweat, and then say whether sin be not an evil thing and a bitter. If even Christ was so beset with amazement and horror, with what agonies shall the finally impenitent sinner be overwhelmed, when he shall sink under the punishment of his own iniquity, and when God shall pour upon him all the fierceness of his wrath!

But, blessed be God! we may also hence infer *that a solid ground of hope is laid for guilty sinners to trust in the mercy of God through the Saviour*. A cheerful hope hence dawns on the trembling soul. See here, not only the evil of sin, but the ground of forgiveness. He suffered for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God. You are all encouraged to come to him by the assurance of a

welcome. Come to him, believing in his name, and trusting in his righteousness. Come to him in penitential prayer. If he made supplication with strong crying and tears, when he suffered for *your* sins, will you refuse to grieve for your *own*, and to implore deliverance from your *own*?

Finally, *What a call for gratitude, and what a source of consolation are here for you who love the Saviour's name!* To you this theme is most affecting and delightful. Your hearts are, at times, ready to fail for tenderness, when you think of this scene. Will you not supremely love and gladly praise Him who was thus agonized for you? Well, too, may the remembrance of this part of your Saviour's history console you amid the trials of life, and the pangs of dissolution. As certainly as he sorrowed under the wrath of God, so certainly shall you escape that wrath, and be happy for ever. As certainly as the cup did not pass from him, so certainly it shall pass from you. Let this hope cheer you on to live to his glory, and to die to be with him. It is recorded that a certain Christian requested his friend to put him in mind of his Saviour's bloody sweat when he should come to be in the agonies of death. This his friend accordingly did, on which the dying believer cheerfully fell asleep in Christ.\* So, when the cold sweat which betokens death shall bedew your bodies, the thought of your Redeemer's sufferings shall cheer your departing spirits. Then shall you see him in the paradise of God, in a very different condition from that in which he was in the garden of Gethsemane; for, he has exchanged his prostrate position for the throne of glory, and the exceeding sorrow of his agony for the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Lord, grant that where he is, there we may be also. Amen.

\* Gerhardi Harm, pars i.

## LECTURE CXXI.

LUKE XXII. 47-53.

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50. And one of them smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

In the last lecture, we took a view of the affecting subject of our Lord's agony in the garden. We now proceed to consider its immediate sequel—his being betrayed by Judas, and apprehended by his combined enemies. Here we shall have frequent occasion to consult the other evangelists, by whom several additional particulars of this part of the sacred history are related.

"*And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.*" You will remember that twice, on his finding the disciples asleep in the garden, Christ exhorted them to watch and pray; but that when he returned the third time, and found them sleeping, he said, according to Matthew, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." While he was thus speaking, a multitude of his enemies approached. Let us consider the parties of whom the crowd consisted. First of all—and how shocking!—there was Judas, one of the apostles. We formerly noticed his temptation by Satan; his ready yielding to that temptation; the joint workings of treachery and covetousness in his heart; his



covenanting with the Jewish rulers, for the mean price of thirty pieces of silver, to deliver up Jesus to them at a convenient season, without tumult; and his seeking, from that time, opportunity to betray him, in the absence of the multitude. That convenient time had now arrived; for, Jesus had retired with his disciples, during the night, to the garden of Gethsemane, and Judas was aware that he had gone thither. Judas then proceeded to carry into execution his infamous purpose, and "was guide to them that took Jesus." It appears from John xviii. 3, 12, that Judas had obtained, and brought along with him, "a band," that is, a band, or rather, "the band,"\* of Roman soldiers, with their "captain," or commanding officer. This band was, probably, the greater part of the soldiers given by the Roman governor to guard the temple. There were also present "officers," or servants,† "from the chief priests, and Pharisees," and "scribes," and "elders of the people," that is, with the authority of the Sanhedrim. However unworthy it was of the dignity of their station, and their profession of piety and justice, there were also present (so keen was their malice against Jesus), some of the principal "priests," and "captains of the temple," or commanders of the Jewish watch, and "the elders;" for, we find Jesus addressing persons of these ranks in a subsequent part of the passage under review. And, though there would not be any very great number of persons of other descriptions present at this unseasonable hour, there were, probably, present some of the dregs of the people; so that, altogether, it might well be said that there was present a multitude, or crowd, or rabble. They came armed with different "weapons," some with "swords," especially the soldiers, and others with "staves," or rather, clubs; and they were prepared to use the violence, both of government authority, and of private malice, rather than fail in their object. And, though its being then the season of the passover shows that it must have been full moon, they came "with lanterns and torches,"‡ no doubt to discover him by their light, if he should conceal himself

\* *Τὸν σκῆμα*. Some think the *σῆμα* corresponded with the cohort, which was the tenth part of a legion, and might contain from four hundred to six hundred men; but Raphelius on Matt. xxvii. 27, seems to have made it out, from Polybius, to have been only the fortieth part of a legion. See on John xviii. 3, 12. Doddridge, Dr Adam Clarke, Dr Campbell, (who translate it "the cohort"), Whitby. Perhaps, the word, after all, is not intended to express any exact number of men.

† *ὑπηρέτας*, John xviii. 3. See also Matthew, and Mark xiv. 43.

‡ John.

in any retired and dark corner, as they seem to have foolishly imagined he might endeavour to do.

As many of the persons employed on this base occasion, especially the Roman soldiers, would be unacquainted with Jesus' person, and as, including our Lord himself, there were twelve men, all dressed, probably, much in the same way; Judas, in order to prevent any mistake, had previously fixed on "a token," or signal. "Whomsoever I shall kiss," said he, "that same is he;" "take him," "hold him fast," "and lead him away safely." His being so particular in cautioning them to be sure to keep him in safe custody, may have arisen from the recollection of his having escaped before on three different occasions, when his life was in danger, namely, when they were to cast him down headlong from the brow of the hill on which Nazareth was built; when they were to stone him in the temple, because he said, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and when they sought to take him, as he was again declaring in the temple the doctrine of his unity with the Father.\* A kiss was a usual mark of love and friendship, and, to great men, of allegiance, as in the 2d Psalm, "Kiss ye the Son." Our Lord probably permitted his disciples to give him this token of affection and reverence when they had been for some time away from him. Judas "went before," leading on the multitude; "and as soon as he was come" into the garden, and within sight of Jesus, "he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, Master,"† hypocritically complimenting him with the honourable title of Rabbi, Rabbi, while the most cruel design lurked in his heart. "He drew near unto Jesus to kiss him," says Luke. "Surely now, if ever, his wicked heart will relent; surely when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by the majesty, or charmed by the beauty of it. Dare he come into his very sight and presence to betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when the Lord turned and looked on him, he relented presently; Judas, however, comes up to his Master's face and betrays him."‡ According to Matthew, Judas said, "Hail, Master, and kissed him."

"*But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*" He well knew the treacherous design of the action; and every word of the question in which he conveyed the sharp rebuke is emphatic. "*Betrayest thou?*"—is the heinous crime of treachery now to be committed?

\* Luke iv. 30; John viii. 59, x. 39.

† Mark.

‡ Henry.

“Betrayest thou *the Son of man*?”—even me, the Messiah, of whose dignity, power, wisdom, and grace, thou hast had so many proofs. “Betrayest thou the Son of man?”—thou whom I have chosen as one of my apostles, and whom I have always treated with so much confidence and kindness. “Betrayest thou the Son of man *with a kiss*?”—if thou hadst resolved on this crime, mightst thou not have devised some more decent way of perpetrating it, than thus coming forward audaciously thyself, and prostituting the acknowledged token of affection to the savage purpose of deadly hatred? Now were fulfilled the words of the Psalmist: “It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”—“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.”—“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.”\* In this view, it is very worthy of remark, that our Lord said to Judas on this occasion, “Friend,” or companion,† “wherefore art thou come?” Joab’s conduct on two different occasions was not unlike the infamous behaviour of Judas in this case. “Joab took Abner aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died.”—“And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab’s hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib,” “and struck him not again, and he died.”‡ Well does Solomon say, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful:” and that is a very bad character against whom he thus cautions us, “He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him. When he speaketh fair believe him not; for there are seven abominations in his heart.” Let us beware of behaving so, in any way, to any human being. Lord, “draw us not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.”§ We

\* Ps. lv. 12, 21, xli. 9.

† 2 Sam. iii. 27, xx. 9.

+ Ἐταῖρος, Matt. xxvi. 50.

§ Ps. xxviii. 3.

justly consider every such case as wicked and base; but how shockingly criminal was this conduct of Judas towards the exalted and merciful Redeemer! Perhaps nothing so horrible ever occurred.

Luke makes no mention of Judas after this; it is, therefore, proper just to notice, in this place, the close of his history. "When he saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself;" thence "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out:" and to complete the horror of the account, he went "to his own place."\* How very dreadful!

We are all ready to exclaim against the wickedness of Judas, and to deprecate his end; but let us not forget that there are many who, if they do not equal him, too closely resemble him in his guilt. Are there not many who profess to be Christ's disciples, and call him Master, but who altogether belie that profession by an ungodly life? "Ye call me Master, and Lord," says he, "and ye say well, for so I am."—"But why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Judas was by no means the only person who ever betrayed the Saviour under the mask of friendship. All gross and scandalous hypocrites—all who, though more cautious, have the form without the power of godliness—all who draw near to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him—all who, under the pretence of zeal for his glory, persecute his people—all who, under the cloak of a regard to the doctrines of grace, turn them into licentiousness—and all who profane his holy table by an unbelieving and dissembling participation, may be said to betray the Son of man, as it were, with a kiss. Let us beware even of partial unfaithfulness and insincerity. Especially, let us beware of wilful and daring treachery and hypocrisy. Let us cultivate a spirit of sincere and consistent friendship to Christ. Let us meditate on the denunciation, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" Let us tremble at the thought of Judas' crime and end. May the Lord deliver us from guilt so heinous, and from an end so dreadful;

\* Matt. xxvii. 3; Acts. i. 18, 25.

and may that innocent blood which lay so heavy on the conscience of Judas as to hurry him into a shocking death, and into endless misery, bring us peace now, calm our hearts in nature's final conflict, and save our souls for ever.\*

Here let us take in that noble display of Christ's power and forbearance recorded only by John.† "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground." The sufferings of Christ have been a stumblingblock and foolishness to many, as supposed to be degrading to him, and incompatible with the reasonable expectation of salvation from him who, they seem to show, could not deliver himself; but it so happens that the most remarkable steps of his humiliation were accompanied by the most remarkable displays of his glory. When he lay a new-born babe in Bethlehem's manger, a star guided the wise men of the East to the spot, to worship him. When he was agonized in the garden, there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him. And now, when he was about to be apprehended as a malefactor, he overthrew a whole multitude with the breath of his mouth. Such was the power of his word, that Judas, the priests, the elders, the soldiers, and the officers, as if struck with lightning, staggered back and fell to the ground. This exercise of our Lord's power marked his displeasure; but it was mixed with much mercy, for, though they must have been alarmed, their lives were spared. In this latter respect, therefore, though similar in some other respects, this occurrence was a complete contrast to what took place when two bands of fifty men, with their captains, who were sent by the king to seize the prophet Elijah, were, in succession, consumed by fire from heaven.‡ It would have been well for the multitude now leagued against Christ, had they duly improved the lesson read to them by their overthrow; for, it would have filled them with godly fear and lively gratitude, convinced them of his ability to save, as well as to destroy, and led them to believe in his name. Let the history of this miracle suitably affect us. If Christ could act thus in the very depth of his humiliation, it is plain that he

\* See Lecture xxvii. for the uses, &c., of Judas' history.

† John xviii. 4.

‡ 2 Kings i. 9-14.

must be quite irresistible on the throne of his glory. When the great day of his wrath shall come, who shall be able to stand? His enemies shall be driven back, and away from him; they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Let us, then, submit to him in time. Let us in sincerity "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

The multitude had a warning and space to repent, but they repented not. As soon as they rose from the ground, they manifested the same determination to seize Christ as before. What an example of the amazing hardness of the human heart! And yet, are there not many who, with similar obstinacy, refuse correction, and who, when raised up from the dust of trouble, or the pain of a dangerous sickness, manifest the same opposition to Christ, and the same regardlessness of salvation as ever?

John adds: "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." Having proved that he could have defended himself most effectually, if he had chosen, he intimated his intention to surrender, on condition, however, of their not touching his disciples; and this he did not ask as a favour, but demanded in a dignified manner. The apostles were not yet prepared for heavy sufferings; and he had much work for them still to accomplish in the world. Here, too, his word was with power, and obeyed, though the persecutors seem to have been originally disposed to seize the whole party. May we not see Jesus here as the surety of sinners, giving up himself that we may escape? May we not, also, behold him here as, in a general sense, the Protector of his people? However numerous and fierce the enemies who beset them, when they enjoy his defence they are safe. Though a host encamp against them, they need not fear; but in this they may be confident.

Our Lord now suffered the combined multitude (of whom some of the officers or servants of the chief priests seem to have been the most forward) to approach and take him prisoner. Matthew says, "Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him." The history then proceeds thus, in Luke: "*When they who were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the*

*sword?*" You remember how Christ had lately said to his disciples, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one;" and how they, mistaking a symbolical way of warning them to make every preparation to meet coming trials for a literal command, said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."\* Seeing plainly that the consequence would be that Jesus would be led away a prisoner by his enemies, unless some attempt were made to rescue him, they thought of using the weapons which they had with them, and inquired of Jesus whether they should do so. It was right to put the question; but they ought to have waited for a reply. On this we may remark, that it is needless, and disrespectful, for a man to ask the advice of a friend, on any subject, if he have already made up his mind, or will not wait a reasonable time for an answer. Let us also observe, that, when we ask direction from Christ, as he has revealed his will in his Word, we should guard against preconceived opinions adopted on other grounds, and also against rash conclusions from Scripture itself, and should calmly and prayerfully seek to know what he teaches and requires, that we may deliberately think and act accordingly.

*"And one of them smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear."* The three first evangelists do not mention the name either of him who inflicted or of him who received the wound; but John gives the name of both. The reason of this is supposed to have been that it might have been dangerous to have mentioned the names at the early period at which the first three wrote, but must have been quite safe at the period John wrote, when the parties were numbered with the dead. The account by John is this: "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." Peter struck at Malchus' head, with the intention of cutting him down; but the sword glancing a little to one side, he only cut off his ear. In this Peter was, without doubt, influenced by love to Christ, and zeal for his cause; but, in the manner in which his love and zeal were manifested, there was much more to blame than to praise. The action was exceedingly rash, and betrayed a great want of common consideration, and of Christian meekness and forbearance. Had not Christ exercised a powerful restraint on the multitude, irri-

\* Verse 36.

tated as they must have been by this assault, there is every reason to suppose that they would have put Peter, and perhaps the whole company, to death on the spot. We learn, from Matthew, that Jesus said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into its place," reproving what he had done, and forbidding all further violence. For this our Lord assigned three reasons. *First*, the danger of violence: "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Those who are given to quarrelling generally suffer for it. The attack on this occasion was plainly very hazardous. In this our Lord may have also referred to the Jews and Romans, who united in persecuting him, and were, so many of them, to perish in war; the Jews by the sword of the Romans, and the Romans, in their turn, by the sword of the Goths and Vandals. The *second* reason he assigned was, that if he had wished to save himself, he could easily have done it: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" If a legion consisted, perhaps, of six thousand men, how numerous must the holy angels be! and if one angel could destroy in the camp of the Assyrians, in one night, a hundred and eighty-five thousand men, how powerful must be an army of more than twelve legions of such beings! Jesus did not need the interference of Peter. We may still say, "God has no need of us—of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we look unto the heavens, and see how he is attended there, we may easily infer that, though we be righteous, he is not beholden to us."\* The *third* reason our Lord gave was that prophecy might be accomplished: "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"—referring to the prophecies concerning his being betrayed by Judas, and crucified for sin.

Viewed more generally, these words of our Lord do not prohibit resistance in all cases, or the use of the sword in just and necessary war. That the employment of a soldier is a lawful employment is obvious from the circumstance that when soldiers came to John the Baptist, saying, "What shall we do?" he said nothing of their renouncing the military life, but only directed them to "do violence to no man," to "accuse no man falsely," and to be "content with

\* Henry.



their wages." But these words are certainly unfavourable to war and bloodshed. Whence come wars and fightings, but from men's evil passions? "Scatter thou the people that delight in war," says the Psalmist. The tendency of the gospel is peaceful, and the effect of its universal prevalence will be universal peace. Then men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." We are here reminded, too, of the great loss and misery which war and violence occasion on both sides. This prohibition also teaches that private persons are not to take the sword into their own hands; that they are not to resist the constituted authorities, and that, if civil rulers send to take them into custody, then, however conscious they may be of their own innocence, they ought to yield themselves up. It is only an extreme case, a most plain call of duty, that can justify even the great body of a nation in opposing the powers that be: for a single person, or a few persons, to offer such opposition, where there is no call of duty, is as foolish as it is sinful. In such cases the oppressed must just submit, and commit their cause to Him who judgeth righteously. The spirit of this passage teaches, moreover, that the sword of violence is not to be used with the view of forwarding Christianity. "My kingdom is not of this world," said our Lord. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."\*—"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal"—they are spiritual, and mighty through God. Is there not, besides, a lesson for us here to govern our temper in our intercourse with men? for, if temper be not restrained, some act of violence may be committed, which will, probably, be retaliated, till such deeds of strife and wickedness be greatly multiplied. Let us also feel cautioned here against every kind of indiscreet and rash zeal. It is good to be zealously affected in a good cause; but let our zeal be according to knowledge, regulated by the Word of God, and tempered with love.

What our Lord said to Peter implied that he was to surrender himself to his enemies; according to John,† however, he expressed plainly his readiness to yield, and to die: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He volun-

\* John xviii. 36.

† John xviii. 11.

tarily surrendered himself, and became a willing sacrifice for his people. "He loved us, and gave himself for us."

The account, in Luke, proceeds thus: "*And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.*" "Suffer ye thus far."\* The meaning of these words depends chiefly on what persons they are addressed to. The plural form of the verb, "Suffer ye," shows that they were not addressed to the wounded man: they must, therefore, have been addressed, either to the disciples or to the surrounding multitude. Some consider them to have been spoken to the disciples, as a check; as if Jesus had said to them, Let this suffice, Proceed no farther, Enough of this, No more of this. Others are of opinion that the words were addressed to his enemies, and intended as a request to them to suffer, or bear with, the wound which had been inflicted on one of their number, as nothing more of the kind would occur, and as Christ was immediately to repair the injury. On the supposition of the words having been addressed to his enemies, some of whom had now come close up to Christ, and had laid hands on him, theirs seems the most probable opinion who consider the words as requesting his enemies to suffer him, or give him his liberty, so far as was necessary for what he intended, namely, touching Malchus' ear, in order to heal it.† "And he touched his ear, and healed him." The cure was instantaneous and complete, and, therefore, miraculous. This miracle manifested, not only much kindness, but also much wisdom, inasmuch as it would prevent reflections on Jesus and his disciples, and cut off all just cause of treating them injuriously. It should have been enough to disarm his enemies; but they still persevered in their malicious intentions. Let us follow, according to our ability, the benevolent example here set by our Master.

\* 'Εἴτε ἰατρικῶς.

† The only difficulty I can see in the way of this interpretation is the alleged improbability of our Lord asking permission to work a miracle; yet, would there not have been something very wise and decorous in preferring the request here supposed, as intimating that he was to make no attempt to escape? Dr Campbell translates the clause, "Let this suffice," which certainly is not a literal version. Dr Campbell has a long note in opposition to Elsner, and the above opinion; but, his reasoning proceeds on the supposition of the word *εὐρεω* being in the masculine gender; now (though the idea does not seem to have occurred to either of these learned men), why may not the word be in the neuter gender, and thus the clause be very properly rendered, "Suffer thus far," or, "this much," or, "to this extent"?

Let us do what we can to heal the wounds and repair the injuries of others, whatever may be their feelings or conduct toward us. Let us render to no man evil for evil; but let us love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us. From this miracle we may also reason thus, If Christ performed so wonderful and so gracious a work of healing on the body in the depth of his humiliation, he is thereby proved to be both able and willing to heal, that is, to save, the soul, now that he is exalted. He is the skilful, powerful, and compassionate Physician of souls. We need his aid; let us seek it. When we remember how he acted to Malchus, no unworthiness of ours should prevent us from applying. Let us go to him, and we shall find that he will fulfil in us his gracious character, "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

Our Lord's enemies persevered in their design against him; accordingly, he expostulated with them, as in the two last verses of the passage before us: "*Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, who were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*" It was absurd and insulting in them to proceed against him as if he had been the leader of a gang of robbers, prepared to make a desperate resistance, and only to be overcome by soldiers and officers, by great force, and as if he had been bent on making his escape. Instead of this, he was the peaceful Teacher of a few humble disciples, and ready to yield himself up. He had lately given abundant evidence, too, that he harboured no unlawful designs, and was not afraid to show himself; for, conscious of his innocence, he had taught in the temple for several successive days, during which his enemies had made no attempt to seize him. No doubt, his safety was secured hitherto, because his hour was not come. Now, however, it was come—now the time had arrived when he was to be seized and crucified. This was *their* hour—the hour in which his enemies were to prevail against him. And this "was the power of darkness"—the season in which Satan, "the ruler of the darkness of this world,"\* was to be permitted to execute his malicious design against Christ, and to "bruise his heel." In express-

\* Eph. vi. 12. See also 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4; Col. i. 1.

ing himself thus, our Lord intimated his submission to his enemies. It was, however, but for an hour, for a short and limited period, that his enemies were to have power over him. The darkness of his sorrows was soon to pass away, and to be succeeded by the endless triumphs of his finished atonement. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." It is still, at times, the enemies' hour, and the power of darkness, with the Church, and with individual believers; but it is cheering to think that it is but an hour, a short period, and that the shadow of death will be soon turned into the morning.

Thus Jesus was seized, and led away a prisoner. Let us conclude, at present, with noticing the circumstance which is stated in Matt. xxvi. 56, and which comes in exactly at this part of Christ's history: "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." He had already said, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." The disciples believed themselves incapable of such conduct, and strongly asserted their determination rather to die than to deny or desert him. Yet now, when they saw him bound and led away, they were all seized with a panic, and fled for safety. It was selfish and unkind to desert their Master at this awful juncture. It was also very wrong, and unnecessarily precipitate, as Jesus had stipulated for their safety, and appears to have intended to give them an honourable dismissal for the time. They did not wait for this, but they deserted their post, and ran off. What is man? How weak and unworthy is he at the best! Let us hence learn not to rest our happiness on men, however dear and excellent, but to rely on the faithfulness of God, "At my first answer," says Paul, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." Let us, also, guard against such inconstancy to any of our fellow-creatures. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Especially, let us guard against such weakness and inconstancy in reference to our Saviour. Let it not be said of us that, when the time of the trial of our principles and courage came, we forsook him and fled. They who forsake him, "forsake their own mercy." When

the Christian considers the profession he makes, and the dignity of the character he sustains, he should be ready to say, with Nehemiah, "Should such a man as I flee?" Let us not forsake our Lord by unworthy conduct in company. Let us not forsake him by outwardly forsaking his ordinances, or his people, or his cause, or by inwardly withdrawing our hearts and our confidence from him. Let us not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise. Let us, instead of forsaking him, forsake all and follow him. And while we are watchful over ourselves, let us look to the Lord for grace to keep us steadfast, saying, Let thy hand be upon us, O God, and make us strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved.

## LECTURE CXXII.

LUKE XXII. 54-62.

"Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58. And, after a little while, another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. 60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

THE Holy Scriptures abound with examples both of what we are to do, and of what we are to avoid; those of the former class being like marks to show the spiritual mariner the course he should steer, and those of the latter like beacons to warn him of the rocks on which others have almost, or altogether, made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. As to the former, we are exhorted "not to be slothful, but to be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" and to "take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering affliction and of patience." As to the latter, it is written, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." It is also to be observed, that it is by no means uncommon to find examples of both these classes in the history of the same person. This might be shown in the case of Noah, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and many others. Suffice it, however, to say that this is peculiarly striking in the case of the Apostle Peter, and that, too, in this one passage of his history—his denial of his Master being one of the most instructive examples in the way of caution, and his return to

a proper sense of his duty being one of the most instructive in the way of a pattern to be followed by all who may be similarly situated. May the Lord guide and bless our meditations, while we consider, in the *first* place, *Peter's fall*.

It is necessary to recollect here the situation in which Christ was now placed. The multitude, led on by the traitor Judas, had apprehended him. "*Then,*" as Luke relates in the first verse of the passage before us, "*took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house.*" Matthew\* says, "They that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled." The words in the parallel passage of John† are: "They led Jesus away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year;" and then it is added, in a subsequent part of the chapter: "Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest." Annas, having been formerly high priest himself,‡ and being so nearly connected with the present high priest, was considered a person of great experience and influence, and was, accordingly, applied to first on this occasion: he, however, sent Jesus to Caiaphas. What occurred to our Lord in Caiaphas' palace will appear afterwards: in the meantime, we are chiefly concerned with what befell Peter.

In order to perceive the greatness of Peter's fall, it is necessary to remember his previous privileges and decided character. He was one of the twelve chosen attendants of the Saviour. He is generally thought to have been one of the oldest, probably the oldest, of the apostles, and is frequently named first in the list. He was highly favoured in being one of the three who were on the mount of transfiguration, and nearest to Christ in his agony. He was distinguished for frankness and courage. He manifested, on various occasions, uncommon readiness in speech and action, and he had certainly not only the form but the reality of religion. When Jesus said to the twelve, "Whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" on which Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." "It is good for us to be here," said Peter, on the mount of transfiguration, with much affection, though he wist not what he said. "Lord, if it be thou,"

\* Matt. xxvi. 57.

† John xviii. 13, 24.

‡ See Luke iii. 2.

said he, "bid me come unto thee on the water;" and when he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me;" and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and saved him. When Jesus said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." After the passover and Lord's supper, when Jesus said to the disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," Peter said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." And when our Lord added, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice," Peter said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." And, finally, almost immediately before his fall, he manifested such zeal and courage in his Master's cause, as to draw his sword, and wound a servant of the high priest. It was not to be supposed that one who had shown so much spontaneous boldness for Christ would now fail, in circumstances by no means very appalling. Yet so it was. In this, "God left him," as he left Hezekiah, "to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."\*

Observe how he begins to falter: "*And Peter followed afar off.*" You will remember that when Jesus was apprehended and led away, "all the disciples forsook him and fled,"—of course, Peter among the rest. Peter, however, soon recovered his self-possession so far as to return from his flight, and to follow Christ. But he followed at a distance; he lingered within sight, that he might see what became of him, yet afar off, afraid to accompany him, or to go quite near, so as to appear to have any connection with him, or to take any interest in him. John† says, "Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace" or court-yard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter." Some suppose that this other disciple was John himself, others that it must have been some convert of greater note, as one in John's humble station of life was not likely to be known to the high priest. Thus, Peter was admitted within the outer gate, into the court-yard of the high priest's house.

\* 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

† John xviii. 15.



*"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall,"* or open court, *"and were set down together, Peter sat down among them,"* that is, among the servants and officers. The passover being a movable feast, the temperature of the weather during it was different in different years. It was sometimes so cold that there were frost and snow. Generally, however, the weather was warm during the day, and yet this did not prevent the need of fire during the night; and it is to be remembered that it was towards midnight when our Lord was arraigned before Caiaphas and the council. An English traveller, who was at Jerusalem at the time of the passover, states that, finding it as warm at that time as it is usually in England at midsummer, he could not but wonder that it should have been so cold as to require fire, as stated in this part of Peter's history. Within a few days, however, his doubt was resolved, for very heavy dews fell, which, not being wholly dried up by the sun, made it very cold, especially in the night.\* *"The servants and officers stood there,"* says John, *"who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."* Peter was now in a place, and in company, in which he ought not to have been. When he had ventured into the palace, he should not have hung back, and he should not have remained among unbelieving attendants, who were disposed to take every advantage of him, and to mock, or frighten him out of his religion, but he should have gone straight forward and joined his Master. Instead of sitting with the servants *"to see the end,"* instead of thus watching in vain curiosity or useless anxiety and alarm, he should have gone in with Jesus to get spiritual good from all that was passing, and to be ready to be of any service to him he could, by his evidence or otherwise. He meanly and undutifully remained without among the servants, and those temptations soon began which he was ill prepared to withstand.

*"But a certain maid beheld him, as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him."* John says that *"the damsel who kept the door"* charged Peter to this effect. Observing his countenance by the light of the fire, she, either from the expression of his face, or from having seen him with Christ before, accused him with being one of Christ's followers. Peter was so stunned at being thus discovered, that he positively

\* Lightfoot on John.

denied his Lord: "*He denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.*" He declared that, instead of being one of his attendants, he did not even know him. This was, even for Peter's purpose, an unnecessary and gratuitous falsehood. Jesus was so generally known by this time, that Peter's safety could not have required him to affirm that he did not even know him by sight, or that he had no acquaintance of him whatever. Thus it is, that when men begin to act wrong, and to prevaricate, they go much farther than is needful for their purpose, and multiply and aggravate transgressions and lies. How base was this conduct in the apostle Peter!

It appears from Matthew and Mark, that, when Peter was thus detected, and had thus denied his Master in the court-yard, "he went out into the porch," or portico; and Mark\* then states that "the cock crew," that is, for the first time. The words of Luke, in the 34th verse of this chapter, are, "Jesus said, I tell thee Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." According to Mark, our Lord said to Peter, "This day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Mark's account is more full than Luke's and Matthew's, but quite consistent with it. It is well known that the vigilant animal referred to usually crows very early in the morning, sometimes soon after midnight, generally, however, not so very early, yet commonly before three o'clock, when the day is of moderate length. The cock-crowing, therefore, is an expression which gives a general idea of a time, but does not mark a precise time; and it is considered as extending from midnight till three o'clock in the morning; though the expression would rather suggest the idea of the latter than the former hour, for the reason just noticed. The words in Luke, "The cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me," assert that Peter was to deny Jesus three times, not before the cock crowed at all, but before the cock-crowing was past; before the second and most remarkable cock-crowing, which was usually called "the cock-crowing." Mark's account explains itself, and clearly intimates that Peter was to hear, and did hear, the cock actually crow two several times, once after his first, or second denial (and the event proved it to be after his first), and again after his third denial. We have already noticed Peter's first

\* Mark xiv. 68, 30.

denial in the court of the high priest's palace, and the first crowing of the cock, when Peter had gone out into the porch. We come to his second denial, of which he was guilty in the portico.

*"And, after a little while, another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not."* This other person was a man. Matthew says when Peter "was gone out into the porch, another maid\* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Mark says, "And a maid," rather, the maid,† "saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them." From these combined accounts, it appears that a man, and also a woman, or two women, attacked Peter at this time, as being a follower of Christ. According to Luke, Peter replied, "Man, I am not." According to Matthew, "he again denied with an oath, I do not know the man." Having once denied, he adheres to his denial, he confirms it with an oath, calling God to witness that he did not even know Jesus. How shocking! It is no proof that men speak the truth that they swear profanely to it; for, those who break the third commandment cannot have any due respect for the ninth.

Verse 29: *"And about the space of one hour after, another (man) confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean."* What this man affirmed was corroborated by others: Matthew says, "After a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee." Peculiarities of dialect and accent mark, in all nations, the inhabitants of different districts, and sometimes become the means of discovering culprits: this should thus teach men to be careful to do nothing which can at any time give them just cause of fear or shame. They knew Peter to be a Galilean by his way of speaking; they knew that most of Christ's followers were from Galilee, and they thence concluded that Peter was one of them. Whatever might be the peculiarities of his speech, he had no reason to be ashamed, nay, it was a great honour, to belong to Christ; and, had not his usual courage utterly failed, he would now have gloried in being one of his disciples. Here take in what is written in John xviii. 26: "One of the servants of the high priest (being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off) saith, Did not I see thee in the

\* Ἀλλῆ.

† Ἡ παιδισκῆ.

garden with him?" On this, Peter, being exceedingly dismayed at the thought of the danger to which he would be exposed were it clearly ascertained that he was the man who made that attack, denied the third time, and that more vehemently than ever. He said, according to Luke, "*Man, I know not what thou sayest,*" asserting that he was so far from being one of Christ's adherents, and from having been with him in the garden of Gethsemane, that he did not understand what was meant by the accusation. We read, in Matthew, "Then began he to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man." More shocking than ever! he denied with repeated oaths and execrations, and imprecated curses on himself if he knew anything of Jesus. Alas! what a fall was here! Peter, an apostle, a celebrated and highly favoured apostle, of great zeal, and well warned of his danger, denies that he knows his Lord, repeats the denial, perseveres in it, swears to it, confirms it with oaths and curses? Lord, what is man! Peter's falling more dreadfully than that of any of the apostles, except Judas, may well be considered as a caution against the error of those who afterwards ascribed to him a supremacy above all his colleagues. We cannot but lament over his fall; but, blessed be God, his history does not end here.

Let us consider, Secondly, *Peter's recovery.*

"*And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.*" While Peter was cursing and swearing that he knew not Jesus, and thus denying him the third time, the cock crew the second time, within his hearing. The divine foreknowledge and providential superintendence of this, in other respects, trivial occurrence, are very remarkable. The most common events in nature, animate or inanimate, are subject to God's control, and are sometimes made signally to promote his wise and gracious purposes. It does not appear, however, that the mere crowing of the cock made any impression on Peter; it rather seems that he did not at first remember the warning connected with it. What seems to have been the chief outward means of touching his conscience was this circumstance, stated by Luke only, "*And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*" Jesus was within sight of Peter, though probably not within easy hearing distance. As his face was towards the high priest and the council, his back was towards Peter; yet his infinite mind knew well what Peter had said, and all that had passed in the court. He turned round in a solemn

manner, and beheld Peter with fixed eyes. So, when he knew that healing power had gone out of him, he "turned him about in the press," "and looked about to see her that had done the thing." He did not call to Peter, for that would have discovered and endangered him; but, his eye catching his, he gave him a piercing look. It was, doubtless, a look of reproof, but not of fierce anger, and threatening judgment. Justly might he have frowned on him with indignation and disdain, and banished him from his presence for ever. But he did not do so. It was a look of mitigated displeasure. It was a look calculated to remind him of the folly of his boasting, and the sinfulness and unkindness of his conduct. When Peter presumed to dissuade him from suffering, he very sharply rebuked him in words, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." When, however, the apostle Peter was unfaithful from the fear of suffering himself, the only reproof his Lord gave him was a look. This look brought to Peter's remembrance all that passed before. It was a look that challenged the truth of what he had been saying. But it was chiefly a look of compassion. The feeling of pity is often very strongly expressed in the look, and it, doubtless, was peculiarly affecting at this time. This look showed Peter that, though his Master was displeased with him, he had not cast him off, but was inviting him to return. It was a look that constrained him to retire and mourn, and a look that assured him of pardon. Moreover, this was a look which was accompanied with divine power, and wrought in him genuine repentance. And how does this appear? It brought to his remembrance the warning he had received, and sent home to his conscience the iniquity of which he had been guilty. "*And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice.*" A conviction of the infinite knowledge and grace of his Saviour, and of his own baseness, rushed upon his mind. His conscience, which had been asleep for a considerable time, awoke with distressing power. He experienced the natural result of warnings despised, of confidence betrayed, of vows broken. He felt himself a base, cowardly, ungrateful, perjured offender. The ultimate effect of these convictions, occasioned as they were by the very kindness of his Master's look, was very salutary. Had he been severely reproached, he might have

fallen into despair; but the same look that pierced, melted his heart, and prepared it for the consolation of pardon.

*"And Peter went out."* He left the palace, the scene of his temptation and of his guilt. He left the profane company there, and sought retirement, to give vent to his sorrows, to humble himself in the dust, and to implore forgiveness. Having gone out, *"He wept bitterly."* The compunction of such a man, for such a crime, must have been very deep, and the tears flowed in abundance from his eyes. Thus bitterly wept the woman who had been a sinner: "She stood at Jesus' feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears." "And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven thee." "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

That Peter was completely forgiven and restored to favour, that his repentance was sincere, and that he ever after remained faithful, we find abundantly confirmed by his subsequent history. Christ, after this, treated him with what may be justly called marked attention and kindness. Our Lord appeared, when risen from the dead, to Peter first, after appearing to the women, and before he appeared to the other apostles: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." As soon as Peter knew that it was the Lord who stood on the shore, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea, in eagerness to reach his Master. When they had dined, Jesus said to him, three several times, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord," replied Peter, "thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my lambs," said Christ to him; "feed my sheep." Peter ever after manifested the most exemplary zeal in the cause of the gospel. He stood up in the midst of the disciples, and proposed the election of an apostle in the room of Judas. It was Peter who was honoured with the first considerable success among the Gentiles. The effect of his sermon, especially on the day of Pentecost, was very remarkable. When he was imprisoned by Herod, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." At that time, as he slept in prison between two soldiers, and bound with chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison, "the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and the angel smote Peter on the side, and raised him up; and his chains fell off from his hands," and the iron gate opened of its own accord, and he was set at liberty. His labours in publishing the gospel

were very abundant. He wrote two epistles full of zeal and affection. And, though he denied his Lord on this gloomy night, he denied him no more, but at last confessed him in the boldest manner, at the expense of his life. His martyrdom was thus foretold by Christ: "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." The commonly received opinion is, that because Peter would not renounce Christ, he was crucified by the order of the tyrant Nero, near to Tybur, on the top of the Vatican mount, and crucified, at his own request, with his head downwards, as judging himself unworthy to suffer in the same position with his Lord and Master. If, then, we were forced to exclaim with sorrow, What a fall! we may also exclaim with joy, What a restoration was here!

In looking back on this deeply interesting account, let us,

1. *Mark and admire the honesty and impartiality of the sacred historians.* All the four evangelists state this blot on Peter's character; and their combined account presents it fully, and with many dreadful aggravations. It is worthy of observation that, though Mark and Peter appear to have been peculiarly intimate,\* and some think that Peter was present with Mark when he wrote his Gospel, Mark is more full than the other evangelists on the circumstance of Peter's fall, and says less than Matthew and Luke of his repentance. He mentions that Peter "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man;" and then, he only says that Peter "wept;" whereas, Matthew and Luke say that Peter "wept bitterly." All this adds credibility to their history, and is very unlike impostors, who, having a dishonest end to serve, keep back what might seem against them, and carefully relate and blazon whatever may be in their favour.

2. *Let the example of Christ, in this case, teach us to pity and to seek to restore the fallen.* We are not entitled to expect perfection in Christians, but must even calculate on grievous offences sometimes occurring among them. We are to grieve over their fall, it is true, but we are not utterly to cast them off. They are not to be counted as enemies,

\* Acts xii. 12; 1 Pet. v. 13; Col. iv. 10.

but admonished as brethren. The apostle thus writes to the Galatians: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." We should seek to bring such an offender to repentance, and if he become penitent, we should receive him. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many," says Paul to the Corinthians, "so that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

3. *Let us consider Peter's denial of his Lord as a warning to us all.* Surely it says to us most emphatically, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Who would have believed Peter to be capable of such a sin? Yet so it was. Let this be a lesson to us. We may soon become very guilty, and be exposed to shame in an unguarded moment; and there is hardly any sin we may not be guilty of, if left to ourselves. It is necessary to remember that there are many ways in which the professing followers of Christ may be guilty of denying him. They may deny him avowedly and expressly by the language of infidelity. They may deny him by heresy, especially heresy relating to his person. "There shall be false teachers among you," saith Peter, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." They may deny him by profane swearing, or other profane language. They may deny him by a bad life. We read of some who profess that they know God, but "in works deny him," and of "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."\* Men may deny him by the neglect of relative duty: "He that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Men may deny him by the habitual want of religious profession, by hanging back when peculiarly called on to confess him, and by shrinking, from shame or fear, when circumstances require them to suffer for his sake. Let us think well of all these things, remem-

\* Jude 4.



bering that Christ observes our conduct at all times, and will ultimately acknowledge or disown us, according as we act towards him now. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us." "Who-soever shall confess me before men," saith he, "him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

4. *Let us be on our guard against the particular causes that led more immediately to Peter's fall.* One chief cause was *self-confidence*. He boasted of himself before, and had no doubt of his ability to stand. It is for us, therefore, to remember that "he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered." It is for us to distrust ourselves, and to put our confidence in God—to attend to the precept, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." It is for us to pray to God to keep us from falling, and to say, "Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." *Indecision*, appearing in following Christ afar off, was another cause of Peter's fall. This betrayed a state of mind that soon issued in a positive denial of the Saviour. Let us beware lest something of the same wavering spirit prevail in us, which may lead to what is still worse. Let us consider whether, if we be following Christ at all, we be not following him at too great a distance. It is good for us to draw near to him, to walk closely with him, to follow him fully. Another cause of Peter's fall was the *fear of man*. "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." The Christian, following the path of duty, should be ready to say, "I will not fear what man can do unto me." *False shame* also operated in this case; for Peter was unwilling to be known as one of the followers of Christ, who were of bad repute with the rulers, and with the majority of his countrymen. Let us not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; but let us glory in his cross, and add to our faith courage. Nor is the temptation of *bad company* to be overlooked in this unhappy affair; for Peter might possibly have remained steadfast had he accompanied Christ, and not consorted with the unbelieving and scoffing attendants of the high priest's palace. Let us be-

ware of needlessly associating with profane persons, and of becoming fond of worldly society, and of going into situations where we must expect to be tempted to prove unfaithful to Christ. "I have not sat with vain persons," says the Psalmist, "neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked."

Finally, *Let those who, like Peter, have fallen, imitate Peter in his repentance.* It may be that some of you have dishonoured your profession, and denied your Lord, by unworthy conduct. Reflect whether you have not done so, and whether you have not been guilty of something to the evil of which your consciences have not yet become duly alive. If so, you may now suppose Christ looking on you, as he looked on Peter, with an eye of displeasure, grief, and pity. Endeavour to realize and to improve this thought. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations."—"And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."—"Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." Renew, with intensity, the joint exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. As Peter went out and wept bitterly, so do you retire, and humble yourselves in the dust before your offended Lord, and continue waiting on him till you obtain forgiveness. Look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn: and he who looks to the humble and the contrite will regard you with an eye of pity and pardon. Sow in tears, and you shall reap in joy. Manifest, also, the sincerity of your repentance, by the faithfulness and devotedness of your future life. Study to be universally conscientious; and be especially careful to avoid the snare in which you were entangled before. Let your sorrow be a godly sorrow, in itself, and in its effects. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."—"Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

## LECTURE CXXIII.

## LUKE XXII. 63-71.

\* And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. 66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, 67. Saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 68. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth."

It was an ancient saying that if Virtue were to appear on earth, in human form, all men would fall in love with her. The saying discovered great ignorance of man's depravity, and great inattention to facts. It is true that perfect virtue had never appeared on earth; but the treatment shown to those who were considered as approaching nearest to such virtue, proved what was to be expected should such a manifestation of moral perfection be given. Socrates, for example, certainly a very extraordinary man, when all circumstances are considered, instead of being universally admired and kindly treated, was envied, and put to death on an accusation of Atheism. And what happened when the supposition in question was realized, when the Son of God, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, who was perfection itself, actually appeared in human form? Did all men admire, love, and support him? Just the reverse. Envy, hatred, contempt, and cruel treatment were his portion: the generality of men rejected him, and his numerous, obstinate, and powerful enemies never rested till his death put it out of their power to persecute him farther. What a striking illustration of this enmity does the passage before us present! and what an affecting fulfilment have we here of the words of the evangelical pro-

phet, "He hath no form, nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not!"

We formerly considered how Jesus was seized, and carried before Annas first, who sent him to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest that year, with whom were assembled the chief priests, elders, and scribes—in a word, the Sanhedrim, or chief council of the Jews—at that late and unseasonable hour, so zealous were they in their opposition to the Saviour. We have also considered Peter's fall and repentance, which happened while Jesus was in the palace of Caiaphas. We come now to consider what happened to Christ himself during that time, and in that place. Then and there it was that he underwent his trial, if trial it can be called, when the substance and forms of justice were equally disregarded.

How shocking the treatment which the blessed Redeemer experienced, as described by Luke, in the three first verses of the passage under review! "*And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.*" Matthew and Mark introduce an account of our Lord being struck and mocked in this way, after their account of his being adjudged to death by the council; hence, some are of opinion that the account by Luke, in these three verses, relates to what took place after Christ's condemnation. At the same time, others have justly observed that there is no inconsistency in supposing that he may have been maltreated in this manner before his condemnation, and then subjected to similar and still more severe maltreatment after it. The men who had him in custody "mocked him" with opprobrious language, and insulting actions. They also "smote him," or beat him very severely so as to cut him.\* Then, covering his eyes, they struck him on the face,† and, taunting him with his character of a prophet, who must be supposed to know all things, they called on him to divine who it was that struck him. Besides all this, they uttered many blasphemies against him not recorded; for blasphemy it was, in the strongest sense

\* *Angew.*

† Micah v. 1.

of the word, or indignity offered to God, thus to speak against the divine Redeemer. They accused him of blasphemy for declaring himself to be the Son of God; but Luke pronounces them to be blasphemers for calling that declaration in question. How impious their demeanour! How inhuman, too, thus to insult and strike this prisoner in the hour of his calamity! David, in many things his type, says,\* "In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not, they did tear me, and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth."

Probably, one of the first things which took place, on this infamous occasion, was what is recorded in the 18th chapter of John, from the 19th verse. "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them who heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said." Had the high priest instituted this examination with the honest desire of eliciting the truth, and doing justice, our Lord would, no doubt, have replied directly and fully; but as the inquiry was made in a spirit of captious malevolence, and with the view of drawing him to say something of which a handle might be made against him, he replied very cautiously, though firmly. He had always taught openly and candidly, and without any sinister design; and now, instead of giving answers in his own cause, which his accusers would distort to his injury, if possible, or altogether disregard, if they found them undeniably favourable, he appealed to those who had heard him preach, and wished them to be examined, that it might be seen whether any charge against him could be established. "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand," or, as it might have been rendered, struck him a blow with a staff,† "saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?" How unjust and unfeeling had this been, though the person struck had been the lowest and most worthless of men!—for even the basest, when on trial, and not yet found guilty, are entitled to, and almost

\* Ps. xxxv. 15.

† The word *jurisum* seems to have come to signify a blow of any kind.

invariably obtain, the sympathy and protection of the court before which they stand. But, how shockingly audacious, how heinously impious, this act of violence against the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person! How daring, in this miscreant, to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed! What merciful forbearance, that he who inflicted this blow was not struck dead, or, at least, that his hand was not withered up, on the spot! Jesus bore the cruel insult patiently, and meekly answered, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" "Can reason be answered by blows? or can such a sober appeal to it deserve them?"\* Neither his former preaching, nor the way of his addressing the high priest at the moment, afforded any excuse for such usage. Thus it is, that when malicious and prejudiced men cannot meet the defenders of the truth with fair argument, they falsely impute to them bad motives and misconduct, and endeavour to bear them down by violence.

In following out our Lord's mock trial, let us here take in what is said of the suborning of false witnesses against him. Matthew† says, "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none." As the high priest's question had failed to draw from Jesus anything on which a plausible excuse for condemning him could be rested, the council, being resolved on his destruction, had recourse to the scandalous expedient of getting men to swear falsely against him, that they might accomplish their nefarious purpose with some show of law. They seem to have encouraged the vilest persons to come forward against him, by letting it be known that they would be favourably received, and, perhaps, rewarded for their perjury. In this respect the history of Christ corresponded with that of David:‡ "False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul." In this respect, too, the history of Stephen was like that of his Master. When his enemies "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake, then they suborned men, who said, We heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the

\* Doddridge.

† Matt. xxvi. 59.

‡ Ps. xxxv. 11.

elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses" against him.\* Though much false evidence was given against Christ, his persecutors "found none" to answer their purpose, none to warrant a sentence against him. In harmony with the law of nature and of nations, there was an express law of Moses,† which these judges, unprincipled as they were, did not choose altogether to despise: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death." It was surely a very decisive proof of the innocence, nay, of the excellence, of Jesus, that men so bent on testifying against him could find so little to say. It seems, too, as if a providential restraint had been laid on these worthless men, who would not have been bound by any religious, or moral principle, but who were prevented from giving anything like a consistent legal testimony against our Lord. Had two or more witnesses agreed in solemnly charging Jesus with some great crime, even though the charge had been false, it would have been a very unpleasant circumstance, and would have furnished a handle for infidels ever after.

Matthew goes on to say, "At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." The account in Mark‡ runs thus: "There arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together." There was an important discrepancy between the words, "I am able to destroy," and "I will destroy," this temple; though, indeed, our Lord did not use either of the expressions. The saying referred to is found in John ii. 19, where, in answer to the Jews demanding a sign, Jesus said, not, I am able to destroy, nor, I will destroy, but, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"—alluding to their killing him, and to his subsequent resurrection, and speaking, as the evangelist expresses it, "of the temple of his body." There was, therefore, a complete perversion of his meaning, as well as a misquotation of his words. And, even though he had used the very worst words in the sense ascribed to

\* Acts vi. 10.

† Deut. xvii. 6.

‡ Mark xiv. 57.

him, they would not have furnished ground for a sentence of death, qualified as the first clause was by the second. It is worthy of observation, too, that the words referred to were spoken by him about three years before, and their being obliged to go so far back for the shadow of a charge against him was a proof of his blameless conduct during almost the whole of his public ministry.

Luke goes on to say, "*And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council.*" They had spent a considerable part of the night in endeavouring to convict Jesus; and without taking proper time for repose, they set on him again, as soon as it was day, so intent were they on their bad work. "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand." There were two sittings of the Sanhedrim before which Christ was brought for trial, the one suddenly called during the dead of the night, in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, and the other, after a short interval, as soon as it was day, called in a more formal manner, and, probably, held in the same place, though some are inclined to think that it was held in the chamber of the temple appropriated for the purpose. Quotations from Jewish writers show that the Sanhedrim sat in different places. We have already read of one sitting in the palace of the high priest during the night; and that this second sitting was held there also is to be inferred from John xviii. 28, where it is said, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment; and it was early;" that is, they led Jesus from Caiaphas' house directly to the pretorium of Pilate, for that is what is meant by the judgment hall, as is plain from the context.\* The mock trial, then, was carried on during two sittings; but it is difficult to determine how much of what is related of it took place at the one sitting, and how much at the other. It is to be observed, also, that some commentators think there was no repetition of the same circumstances, while others think that there was. Probably something of what had passed at the former sitting was repeated at the latter, to prepare the way for farther proceedings.

Following out the account by Matthew, we find it written, "And the high priest arose" (stood up solemnly in

\* See Macknight's Harmony.



the midst of the council), "and said unto Jesus, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?"—he called on him to explain these things, and to declare whether the charges were true or false: "But Jesus held his peace." Aware of the determination of the wicked judges to condemn him, and knowing how vain it would be to attempt any defence, or explanation, he submitted to the injurious treatment in meekness and silence. Now were fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment."

Having failed in their attempt to obtain evidence from others, in any degree sufficient to convict him, his enemies persevered in endeavouring to elicit matter of condemnation from our Lord's own mouth. They "led him into their council," says Luke, "*saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us.*" This question was prompted by the deepest and most malevolent artifice; and they were prepared to turn his answer against him, whatever it might be. Should he say that he was the Christ, they were prepared to condemn him as falsely assuming that title. Should he say he was not the Christ, they were still prepared to condemn him as an acknowledged and self-convicted impostor, who had formerly advanced a claim which he was now unable to maintain. Not being under any obligation, as yet, to answer this question directly, he replied cautiously as follows: "*If I tell you, ye will not believe.*" Though Jesus had been sparing of declarations of his Messiahship, it was by this time universally understood that he claimed that office. He had given most satisfactory evidence of the justice of his claim in the many miracles which he had wrought; and on these miracles he had always rested the proof, rather than on any positive declarations of his own, which of themselves would have had little weight. "If I bear witness of myself," said he, "my witness is not true"—that is, you would not believe it merely on that account, merely on my word: "the works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."—"If ye believe not me, believe me for the works' sake." So, instead of giving a direct answer to John the Baptist's inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" he directed the messengers to tell John the miracles which they saw, and the

preaching to the poor which they heard.\* He had also appealed to the Old Testament, saying, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me." Nor had he, by any means, altogether abstained from express declarations of his being the Messiah. He said to the woman of Samaria, "I that speak unto thee am he;" and to the blind man whom he had restored to sight, "Thou hast both seen him" (the Son of God), "and it is he that talketh with thee." When Peter said to him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Nay, we read of him, in the 5th chapter of John, calling himself "The Son of God," and "The Son of man" (two names of the Messiah), in the presence of a promiscuous assembly of Jews. Still, the great body of the Jews would not believe in him; and their rulers, especially, always manifested a determination not to be convinced. Jesus, therefore, knew that the most solemn asseverations at the bar of these rulers would be to no purpose, and that if he should tell them that he was the Christ, they would not believe. On a former occasion, when he was walking in the temple, in Solomon's porch,† "the Jews came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." "Then Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep."

Jesus also added, at this time, "*And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go*"—If I question you as to the reason why ye will not believe in me, and how you can account for all the miracles performed by me, and all the prophecies fulfilled in me, without acknowledging me to be the Messiah, you will not give me any reply. That they would have maintained a sullen and obstinate reserve may be gathered from their conduct when he asked them whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men. They answered, that "they could not tell whence it was."‡ If they now maintained that he was not the Christ, they were bound, either to answer his proofs of his being so, before condemning him and putting him to death, or to acquit him, and set him at liberty; but they would do

Matt. xi. 4.

† John x. 24.

‡ Luke xx. 7.

neither; and, therefore, all questions on their part, or on his, were useless. As they had prejudged the cause, it was needless for him to attempt to bring it to a fair issue.

Here comes in the circumstance mentioned in Matthew xxvi. 63; "And the high priest answered and said unto Jesus, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." The high priest, having failed to obtain a categorical answer to his question when he addressed it to our Lord in the ordinary familiar way, now puts him upon oath. He adjures him, calls on him to swear by the name of the living and true God. This appears to have been the common form of administering an oath among the Jews at that time; and, "after such adjuration by a magistrate, or lawful superior, the answer returned by the person adjured was an answer upon oath: a false answer was perjury, and even the silence of the person adjured was not deemed innocent." \* Our Lord being thus regularly and solemnly called on, answered explicitly, and said to the high priest, according to Matthew, "Thou hast said," or, according to Mark, "I am;" that is, Yes, it is as thou hast said—I am the Christ, the Son of God. He also added, according to Matthew, "Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;" or, as in Luke, "*Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.*" In these words, Jesus probably alluded to the prophecy in Daniel: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." And, in what he now said, he seems to have referred, partly to his exaltation to the right hand of God, partly to the advancement of his kingdom on earth, and partly to his providentially coming to punish the Jewish nation; but ultimately and chiefly, to his coming to judge the world at the last day. In this latter view especially, the declaration, as made to his unjust judges at this moment, was peculiarly solemn and appropriate. They might

\* Dr Campbell: ἱσχυρίζω εἰ. Gen. xxiv. 3: "I will make thee swear by the Lord;" ἱσχυρίζομαι εἰς Κύριον—Septuagint.

disbelieve him, and reject him, and condemn him to death; but he maintained his claim, and declared that, though he now stood lowly and insulted before their tribunal, the time would arrive when they should stand before his—the time when he was to come to bless his followers, and to take vengeance on the proudest of his enemies.

To make sure of their prey, they press him again with the question: "*Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?*" He had just called himself the Son of man, and they ask if he was the Son of God. These were two different names of the same person, and the passage shows that it was the faith of the ancient Church, that Messiah was to be both the Son of man and the Son of God. Jesus again confessed plainly: "*He said unto them, Ye say that I am;*" that is, he made another affirmation that he was what they said, namely, the Son of God. After mentioning Christ's confession and declaration, that they should see him coming in the clouds of heaven, Matthew adds, "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of witnesses? behold now ye have heard his blasphemy." Men were accustomed, in ancient times, to express extreme grief, and also indignation, by rending their upper garment. Thus, Reuben rent his clothes when he saw that Joseph was gone, Jacob, when he was made to believe that Joseph was torn by a wild beast, and Job, when he heard of the various calamities which had befallen him. Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, came to Hezekiah, with their clothes rent, and told him the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh; and when the king was told, he too rent his clothes. When the people at Lystra were about to offer sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul, these two holy men, full of grief, and also of abhorrence at the idea, rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, and restrained them. Though the high priests were prohibited by the law from rending their clothes for the dead,\* as it became them to be superior to the violence of passion, it seems to have been thought lawful for them to testify, by this action, their abhorrence of blasphemy and gross impiety.† No doubt, the high priest, on this occasion, wished to appear very pious, and seemed to say, by the action, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts;" but the appearance he assumed was absolute hypocrisy. He received the very answer which he wished, and doubtless rejoiced in it, as putting

\* Lev. xxi. 10.

† Joseph. Wars, II. 15. 1 Mac. xi. 71.

Jesus completely in his power: to put on, therefore, the appearance of grief and horror was most dishonest and most wicked. The high priest took the lead, and was joined in what he said by the rest of the council: "*And they said, What need we any further witness: for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.*" It is true that confession supersedes the necessity of any other proof; but, in order to any punishment following, it must be confession of what is a real crime. In this case, had any regard been paid to the forms of justice, it remained to be shown that his assertion was untrue, before any decree could have gone forth against him as an impostor and blasphemer. Now it was that the high priest, as president of the council, put the question to them, as we read in Matthew, "What think ye?" He asked them to give their opinion on the case, to state what sentence they would propose. Matthew says, "They answered and said, He is guilty of death;" and Mark, "They all condemned him to be guilty of death." What an iniquitous sentence! It was honourable for Joseph of Arimathea that he did not consent to this wicked decision.\* If present at the time, he must have expressed his dissent; as the hour, however, was unseasonable, he may not have been there at all. It is reasonable also to suppose that Nicodemus did not consent to this horrible deed. Now were fulfilled our Lord's own words:† "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death."

On his condemnation, those who held him renewed and aggravated their insults. "Then," says Matthew, "did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" How brutal! Even the condemned are under the protection of the law. "Sufficient unto them is the punishment" awarded, and they are defended against other inflictions. It was not so with the Lord Jesus Christ; for his enemies broke loose on him with fiendish malice, as if he had been unworthy of the pity usually shown even to the basest criminals.

In improving this passage, let us,

1. *Consider and follow Christ as an example.* In this view, several points are worthy of our notice. Let us consider and follow him in respect of his *innocence* of every-

† Luke xxiii. 51.

† Matt. xx. 18.

thing that could furnish his enemies even with a plausible pretence for condemning him. With all their malice and ingenuity, they could not substantiate a charge against him. It will be well if our enemies can allege nothing serious against us, without the violation of truth; for then we shall be able to meet them with a flat denial, and make good our defence in the estimation of every impartial judge. Job could say to his accusers, "God forbid that I should justify you; till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous." Let us consider and follow Christ as here furnishing an example of *patience*. How admirably did he behave in this respect, throughout the whole course of the multiplied indignities and cruelties to which he was now exposed! If any of us are called to a similar trial, let us consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For, what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Let us observe and imitate his *prudence*. He carefully avoided doing or saying anything to expose his life to danger, till he could no longer avoid it with propriety. This was one way in which the prophecy was accomplished in him; "My servant shall deal prudently." So, let us not needlessly and rashly endanger ourselves; but let us be cautious how we speak and act before those who would "make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought." At the same time, let us observe and follow the example which Jesus here set of holy *boldness*. However prudent, he was not cowardly. When the time came, he spoke out courageously, though he was well aware of what was to be the consequence. Thus it was, too, that his faithful martyrs confessed him, when, by the very act of confession, the sentence of their death was sealed. In like manner, let us ever behave with becoming fortitude—let us add to our faith courage.

2. *Let us beware of resembling our Lord's persecutors.*

The whole of this history manifests the natural enmity of the heart to God and Christ, and its desperate wickedness in every respect. There is here a caution to rulers and judges to beware of pre-judging causes, and of imagining; that because those whom they oppress cannot call them to account, therefore their crimes are no crimes. There is here a caution to all to beware of resembling these wicked men in their mockery and cruelty. Christ has often been maltreated in the person of his followers, who have had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments." "If they have persecuted me," said he, "they will also persecute you." It is still common to misquote the words, and pervert the meaning of the pious. Jesus Christ himself is hated when his image in his people is hated; he is opposed and condemned himself when his cause is opposed and condemned. "Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Let us beware of imitating the unbelief here manifested. These obstinate men would neither believe Jesus' word nor his miracles, but rejected him, to their ruin. Let us acknowledge, receive, trust, and obey him, as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners.

3. *Let us admire the love which Jesus displayed in submitting to all this for us.* This must be acknowledged to be an affecting history in every view; but it must appear peculiarly affecting to us, if we, in this, regard the sufferer as connected with us in the close and most important relation of our substitute. It was not a private person who was thus treated, but our Surety and Covenant-head. If he was mocked, buffeted, spit on, tried, and condemned, it was for us. Here we may see him acting, and hear him speaking, in our behalf, according to the prophetic words in Isaiah:\* "The Lord God hath opened mine ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." What love was this to us helpless and perishing sinners! We are justly accused and condemned by the holy law of God; he was unjustly accused and condemned by wicked men, that we might be acquitted at the bar of God. He was detained, that we might be set at liberty. He was silent, that we might have an all-prevailing plea. He was mocked, and

\* Isa. l. 5.

smitten, and blindfolded, that we might be honoured, and blessed, and see the light of an endless day. His face was covered with shame and spitting, that we might lift up our heads with joy. Blessed be he who submitted to be so treated for us! For every mocking word let there be ascribed to him a thousand praises—for every stroke ten thousand blessings.

Lastly. *Let us practically anticipate the time when we shall see the Saviour sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* He is already actually exalted—let us rejoice that he is gone to the Father. We see something of his glory in the success of his cause on earth; let us pray that that success may be greatly extended, and take care that we ourselves be trophies of his victorious grace. But we shall, in due time, see him with the bodily eye, coming to judge the quick and the dead at the last day. Let us think very often and very seriously of this; and let the thought bend his enemies into submission, and encourage his friends to fidelity. Let us watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.”



## LECTURE CXXIV.

## LUKE XXIII. 1-12.

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king. 3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood, and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."

WE have seen how our Lord underwent a kind of mock trial before the chief council of the Jews, and how, in defiance of all form and substance of justice, he was condemned to death by that iniquitous and infatuated tribunal. Writers on the customs of the Jews show that they had regulations by which they were prohibited from judging capital cases during the night, or on a feast day, and from pronouncing sentence in such cases till the day after trial, and by which they should have been at their prayers, or saying their phylacteries, very early in the morning after the paschal supper; but these particular canons, as well as the general principles of equity, they trampled under foot, in their eagerness to accomplish their rancorous purpose against the Son of God. Matthew says,\* "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took

\* Matt. xxvii. 1.

counsel against Jesus to put him to death." They had already passed sentence of death against him, but they had not the power to carry it into execution, at least, not without the consent of the Roman government, the authority of which was now supreme, and under which the Jews were now held in a kind of vassalage, though they were allowed, in many respects, to follow their own customs, and to put in force their own ecclesiastical laws.\* This proved that the sceptre had departed from Judah, and, therefore, that Shiloh was come. The Jewish rulers, being anxious to have Jesus put to death, yet not daring to do it themselves, resolved to apply to the Roman governor, that thus they might accomplish their purpose, more in accordance with existing powers, with less danger and odium to themselves, and with greater ignominy and cruelty to the innocent sufferer. Thus it is, that many are more afraid of the danger and scandal of sin than of sin itself. Let it not be so with us; but, as we would avoid the greatest misery and disgrace at last, let us avoid all iniquity now, however securely, for the time, we may suppose it is in our power to perpetrate it.

Luke says, in the opening of this chapter, "*And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.*" As the common people were, in general, favourably disposed towards Jesus, the multitude here mentioned must have consisted of the chief priests, elders, scribes, captains of the temple, and officers, and other dependants. Matthew mentions that Christ's persecutors "bound him." He was bound before, when seized in the garden, and led away to the high priest's house.† His being bound now must, therefore, imply that his bonds were loosed during his trial, or, that he was now bound more closely. As the typical

\* There is considerable diversity of opinion among the learned as to how this matter stood, some holding that the power of life and death was authoritatively taken from the Sanhedrim by the Romans; some, that the exercise of this power had gradually gone into disuse from the general laxity of morals and prevalence of crimes, which deterred the Sanhedrim from acting with decision; and some, that their not proceeding to inflict capital punishments had a connection with the removal of the council from the apartment called Gazith, which was appropriated for it in the temple. Lightfoot, on Matt. xxvi. 3, quotes largely in support of the two last ideas. Stephen was put to death without the authority of the Roman governor; but that was a deed of hasty violence. On the whole, it is sufficiently plain that the Jews no longer regularly retained the power of capital punishment. See Pearce, Calmet, and Lardner's Credibility, part i., book i., chapter 1.

† John xviii. 12.

sacrifices were bound, so was the true sacrifice. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." If the apostle Paul said of what happened to himself, who was but a servant of Christ, "Remember my bonds," surely, it especially becomes us to remember the bonds of our divine Master and Redeemer. "Christ, being publicly bound before the tribunal of an earthly judge, not for his own sins, as appears from the mouth of the judge himself, but for the sins of us all, was condemned to the cross, that we, most guilty creatures, being freed from the penalty of our sins, might be publicly justified before the tribunal of God, and the assembly of his angels."\* They led Jesus to Pilate, or, as in Matthew, "They delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." Pilate is generally believed to have been a native of Italy. He was appointed procurator of Judea, in the room of Gratus, in the year of our Lord 26 or 27. He governed ten years, and these during the reign of the emperor Tiberius. Philo and Josephus describe him as an obstinate and passionate man, who sold justice, and pronounced any sentence for money. They mention his extortions, murders, and torments. The excessive cruelty of his government disturbed the repose of Judea, and was the chief occasion of the revolt and troubles which succeeded. We found him mentioned in the beginning of the 13th chapter, where it is said that he "had mingled the blood of" certain "Galileans with their sacrifices." Such a man was a fit instrument for the Jewish rulers on this occasion.

Let us here notice the parallel passage in John xviii. 28: "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment," that is, the prætorium—the place or court in which causes were heard, and judgment given by the prætor, or other chief magistrate. "And it was early," adds John—so eagerly were they bent on accomplishing their cruel purpose without delay. "And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover." The prætorium was part of Pilate's palace, that is, of the house of a Gentile. The Jews were forbidden to touch any unclean person,† and Gentiles were generally considered to be ceremonially unclean. The Jews often carried their care, in this respect, farther than the law of Moses required; and, whether rightly or not, they would not enter Pilate's house at this time. The passover here mentioned, of which they were

\* Beza.

† Lev. xv. 10.

desirous to eat, was not the paschal lamb, for, that was eaten the evening before, but the chagigah, as it was called, or the sacrifices offered the next day; indeed, the feast of the passover, in the most extensive sense, lasted seven days.\* Taking the most favourable view of the conduct of these Jews, and supposing them to be acting according to the law in refusing to go into the prætorium, what vile hypocrisy do we here observe! How hypocritical, to pretend such a regard for the sanctity of the ordinance, and such a desire to partake of it, at the very moment when they were cherishing such rancour in their breasts, and preparing to imbrue their hands in the blood of the Son of God! This was quite of a piece with the character of those who “devoured widows’ houses, and for a pretence made long prayers;” and who “strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel.” May we be preserved from the notorious partiality and hypocrisy of being satisfied with scrupulosity in some things, however important, while we omit other things also of importance, nay, perhaps the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” These things we ought to do, and not leave the other undone. Let us be especially on our guard against evil passions, when we are about to wait on God in any solemn ordinance. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. “Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.”—“Is it such a fast that I have chosen?” saith the Lord.

The evangelist John proceeds to mention that “Pilate then went out unto them;” in compliance with their scruples, he left the prætorium, or judgment hall, and sat in judgment in some open place adjoining. When Jesus was set before him, he said, “What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up unto thee.” They replied with somewhat disrespectful smartness, being displeased that he did not take it on their word that Jesus was a notorious offender, and order his execution immediately. But, as Paul said, “It was not the manner of the Romans” (nor can it be the manner of any who preserve the shadow of justice) “to deliver any man to die before he who is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.” It had been well for Pilate if he

\* See Lecture on xxii. 7, &c.

had acted fairly on that principle, and gone through with the case, which it certainly was his duty to settle. He said, however, to the Jews, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Being unwilling to engage in this cause, of which he was, probably, by no means ignorant, he thus endeavoured to shift it from himself at once. His words were ambiguous; they might bear the construction that the Jewish rulers were at liberty even to put Jesus to death; and yet, had they done so, the words were not so express but that Pilate might have found fault. If he spoke cautiously so did they, for they said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." This intimated that nothing short of Christ's death would satisfy them. Here, too, though his enemies seem to have looked no farther than the accomplishment of their murderous design in the most safe and effectual way, the providence of God was concerned, and so overruled all these circumstances, "that," as John says, "the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." He had repeatedly foretold that he was to be crucified.\* Crucifixion, however, was a Roman, and not a Jewish form of punishment; and, had Jesus been put to death under the charge of blasphemy, according to the Jewish law, he must have been stoned to death, as that law expressly enjoined, and as was the case with Stephen;† and thus, the prophecy would have been falsified. But that could not be. The decree of God, as to the manner of our Lord's death, was fulfilled, without destroying the moral responsibility of the agents. "Him being delivered," said Peter, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." We have here, also, an example of wicked ecclesiastical rulers abusing their influence with the magistrate, and inducing him to enforce their cruel and persecuting measures. Thus, the ministers of the Man of Sin first condemned those who would not submit to their unscriptural impositions, and then handed them over to the civil power.

Finding Pilate not satisfied with the general accusation against Jesus of being "a malefactor," the Jews proceeded to advance specific charges. Luke says: "*And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king.*" Though it was on a charge

\* John xii. 32; Matt. xx. 18.

† See Lev. xxiv. 16; Acts vii. 59.

of blasphemy that they had just condemned him to death in their own council, they laid no stress on that charge before Pilate, but fixed on what would more readily excite the jealousy of the Roman government, and render him obnoxious to punishment from the procurator. They accused him of sedition, of perverting the nation by his teaching, of stirring them up to rebel against the Roman emperor. With regard to the particular charge of his forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, his reply to the scribes and Pharisees,\* on a former occasion, proves the shocking injustice and falsehood of that; for, in answer to their question, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?" and after a current coin was produced with Cæsar's image and inscription, he said, "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." With regard to the other charge, of his setting up for a king—he did, indeed, claim, and was about to establish, a kingdom, but not such a kingdom as interfered with Cæsar's—a point of which he himself soon gave a satisfactory explanation. These tangible charges being refuted, the undefined charge of stirring up and perverting the nation need not be noticed. How base the duplicity here manifested by these persecutors! In order to serve their malicious purpose, they pretended a great zeal for the Roman government, though they hated it most heartily, and would gladly have thrown it off if they could. They seem to have expected an immediate sentence against Christ, on the ground of sedition; but Pilate so far followed the forms of justice, as to resolve to inquire for himself.

"*And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews?*" Before putting this question, Pilate had gone in to the prætorium, for John† says, "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?" He examined Jesus privately, or, at least, apart from the Jews, for they would not go into the hall. Our Lord, at first, replied to Pilate's question, as stated in John xviii. 34, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" He inquired whether it was from any suspicion of Pilate's own to which any part of his conduct had given rise, that this question was put, implying that that could hardly be the case; or, whether it was not rather solely from the officious

\* Luke xx. 25.

† John xviii. 33.

interference of others, implying, that such indeed was the fact, and that it would be proper for Pilate to consider who they were that had brought forward the charge, and what was their character for impartiality and truth. In this view, what Jesus said was important and appropriate, and betrayed no want of due respect for the governor. "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?" He replied, with some sharpness, as disdaining the idea of being a Jew. "Thine own nation," added he, "and," especially, "the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?" He wished to have our Lord's own account of what he had done to expose himself to such a charge. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world;" that is, most plainly, he was not erecting a temporal kingdom, but a spiritual; he put forward no claim which interfered with Cæsar's; he sought no power of which civil government need be jealous. "If my kingdom," continued he, "were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence"—it is not earthly in its origin. In fact, had he come forward to assert a temporal kingdom, and to throw off the Roman yoke, it is probable that he would have been joined by the whole Jewish nation, with the chief priests and rulers at their head. Let us ever remember the real nature of Christ's kingdom, or reign. The kingdom of God is within men. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or anything external, "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It has its seat in the individual heart, and thus, it is true, ultimately influences society.

Hearing, however, our Lord speak of a kingdom, "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king." This part of John's account corresponds with the third verse of the passage of Luke under consideration: "*And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it;*" he answered in the affirmative, Thou hast said it, or, It is as thou hast said. Now that the proper time was come to make the distinct declaration, our Lord did not hesitate. Let us, in this, admire the fortitude of the Redeemer, and imitate his example. Let this encourage us to confess him, and to be faithful to him. It is thus that Paul teaches to improve this part of the sacred history, when he writes to Timothy,\* "Fight the good fight

\* 1 Tim. vi. 12-14.

of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." According to John, our Lord gave this farther explanation of the nature of his kingdom: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." He bore witness to the truth by revealing it, and by confirming it by his miracles; and he was to reign by means of the truth; that is, it was the truth of the gospel, understood and believed, that was to be the means of making men his subjects, or disciples. "Every one," added he, "that is of the truth heareth my voice." On this, "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"—a most important question, if it had been put in a proper spirit. We cannot be certain with what exact intention, or meaning, it was put by Pilate. There were many contradictory opinions among the ancient philosophers as to what was truth, and some of them were accustomed to affirm that it was entirely out of man's reach. Pilate may have referred to some of these notions; or, he may have intended to inquire what was the truth spoken of by our Lord. But, whatever may have been his meaning, he did not wait for an answer; for John tells us that "when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews." In like manner, many begin to inquire into religion, but have no patience to wait for effectual instruction. Let us not only institute, but follow out the inquiry. Let us seek this knowledge humbly, prayerfully, and perseveringly; and the Lord himself will "lead us in his truth, and teach us;" he will "guide us into all truth;" we "shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free."

John states that as soon as Pilate had said, "What is truth?" "he went out again unto the Jews," that is, he left the judgment hall, and went out into the open court, "and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all." This corresponds to what we read in the 4th verse of Luke's account before us, "*Then said Pilate to the chief priests and people, I find no fault in this man.*" Even after Jesus had declared himself a king, and the king of the Jews, Pilate said he found no fault in him; for he considered him as having given a satisfactory explanation of his meaning, or, at the



worst, as a person deserving contempt, rather than punishment. He told them that, after examination, he found nothing dangerous in him—nothing to show that he meditated rebellion, or was an enemy to Cæsar, or a disturber of the peace; and, therefore, that he could not see how he could condemn him to death. This was so far ingenuous and commendable in Pilate; and it would have been well had he continued to speak and act in the same way, and to vindicate the character and defend the person of the injured. As it was, this was a noble testimony to the innocence of our Lord.

His enemies, however, were not to be turned aside from their purpose, for, Luke adds, "*And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*" They not only persevered, but became more vehement in their accusations. Without fixing on any particular instances, they reiterated general charges, being resolved, if they could not otherwise succeed, to carry their point by noise and violence. Now were fulfilled in him the words, "Many bulls," cruel and violent men, "have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion." The charge of stirring up the people, divested of malicious misrepresentations, was an honourable testimony to his diligence in preaching, for, as to the accusation of sedition, that was utterly false. So, however, it has frequently happened that the faithful publishers of the awakening truths of the Gospel have been maligned as disturbers of the public peace. When Paul and Silas, for example, came to Thessalonica the unbelieving Jews complained to the rulers of the city, "crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."\*

"*When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.*" Jesus was considered a Galilean, because, though he was born in Bethlehem, he spent the greater part of his life in Nazareth and Capernaum. When he entered Jerusalem in triumph, the multitude said, "This is Jesus the prophet, of Nazareth

\* Acts xvii. 6.

of Galilee."\* The Herod here mentioned is Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who beheaded John the Baptist, and whom our Lord described as a fox, or cunning and cruel man. He was the son of Herod the Great, during whose reign Christ was born—the uncle of Herod Agrippa, who slew with the sword James the elder—and the grand-uncle of that Agrippa who said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." This Herod Antipas was an Idumean, but, being a Jewish proselyte, he had come to Jerusalem at this time, probably for the purpose of observing the passover. We have observed that Pilate was unwilling to proceed against Christ, and we now find him glad of an excuse for shifting the case from himself altogether, by referring it to Herod, under the pretence that Christ properly belonged to the district over which Herod presided. In this way, the prediction in the 2d Psalm, quoted in the 4th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, was fulfilled by providential arrangement: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

"*And when Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*" We read before, in the 9th chapter, 9th verse, that Herod said, "John have I beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him." This desire did not proceed from any proper regard to Christ himself, or his doctrine; but from curiosity like that of the Jews before, who said, "Show us a sign from heaven;" and, therefore, the desire was not gratified as to miracles. Let us beware of this spirit. Let us desire to see Christ—to wait on him in his ordinances, not from curiosity, or for the sake of amusement, or for any improper or inadequate reason, but from a sincere desire for spiritual benefit. It is interesting to remember that the poorest who applied, in a proper way, to our Lord, for the exercise of his divine power in their behalf, were successful, but the proud prince, who desired it improperly, was refused. He

\* Matt. xxi. 11.

might easily have seen Christ's miracles, and waited on his preaching, in Galilee, but he would not; and now he is justly left without a miracle. Let us, hence, practically remember that Christ's spiritual blessings, like his miracles of old, are not to be bought with money, or extorted by power, yet ready to be bestowed freely on all who seek them in sincerity. And let us know, in the day of our merciful visitation, the things which belong to our peace, lest they be for ever hid from our eyes.

"Then he questioned with him in many words," that is, Herod asked Jesus many questions; "*but he answered him nothing.*" He knew that whatever answer he might give, Herod would cunningly turn it against him; and, therefore, he made no reply. He preserved a dignified silence in the presence of one whose character was altogether vile. He acted on his own precept, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." So it was that he had been silent before the Jewish council and Pilate, till the proper time came for him to speak. Now were fulfilled in him the words in Isaiah: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." And now we see the antitype to David's case described in the 38th Psalm: "They also that seek my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." Here, too, we have an edifying example of attention to the rule, "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." And the Apostle Peter mentions this as one part of our Lord's example that we should follow: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

"And the chief priests and scribes stood, and vehemently accused him." As before Pilate, so before Herod, his enemies were violent in their charges against the Saviour. Their eagerness, however, only betrayed their own rancour, and was anything but a proof of his guilt.

*"And Herod, with his men of war, set him at nought, and mocked him."* Not judging his case to be of sufficient importance to excite serious apprehensions, or to call for any severe sentence, Herod, with his military attendants, treated Jesus as despicable, and derided and insulted him. In particular, as a mark of contempt for his pretensions to the kingly office, Herod *"arrayed him in a gorgeous robe,"* a shining and highly ornamented garment.\* It was, probably, a white garment, as the Jewish nobles were dressed in that colour. Pilate's soldiers, probably, taking the hint from this, afterwards clothed Jesus in a purple robe; in this, they who were Romans followed the idea of their own country, in which purple was the imperial colour. This conduct on the part of Herod and his men of war was most impious and most insulting, and not to be thought of without horror. Here let us admire and adore the Lord of glory, who underwent all this mockery for us; and let us learn cheerfully to bear any insult for him. However shocking this was in itself, it is pleasing to think that it was part of the humiliation price of his glorious exaltation. Though Herod and other rulers despised him, kings and nations shall acknowledge his authority as Messiah, and adore him as God. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee." Having thus mocked our Lord, Herod *"sent him again to Pilate."* He sent him to Pilate, to do with him as he pleased, which was complimentary to that ruler. At the same time, this was another testimony to our Lord's innocence; for, though he had been accused of stirring up the inhabitants of Galilee to sedition, Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, found no ground for the charge.

The last circumstance stated in the passage under review is this, *"And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."* We have no authority for saying what gave rise to this quarrel, though it may have arisen, as some have conjectured, from the outrage committed on the Galileans, who were subjects of Herod, "whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices."† It is easy to suppose how disputes might arise between unprincipled rulers living contiguous,

\* Ἐσθῆτα λαμπράν.

† Luke xiii. 1.

and jealous of each others interference. Now, however, Pilate and Herod were reconciled; and the occasion of their reconciliation was very remarkable, namely, that of their interchanging complimentary messages, while they sent about from the one to the other, as a prisoner, and combined to mock and abuse, the Lord of glory. We may here observe, that bad men who are rivals, and whose worldly interests are considered as interfering, are very ready to become enemies. Instead of being influenced by benevolence, they live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. In perfect consistency with this, however, we are here reminded that friendships between bad men are often cemented in a union of wickedness. Similarity of views and pursuits forms a bond, and that bond is a bond of iniquity. It is true that bad men are not to be discouraged from joining in that which is in itself good, and that it is no sufficient proof that a cause is bad that some bad men are found to espouse it. But, any very general and persevering espousal of a cause by notoriously erring, or irreligious men, is quite enough to excite a suspicion of the cause itself. Often have the differences of the most opposite parties been sunk in a combination to oppose true religion. The Jews agreed that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue; and the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians united to bear him down. In reference to a certain period of the history of the Church it is written, in the Book of Revelation, "The ~~ten~~ kings have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast—these shall make war with the Lamb." Do we not see in our own day men of all political parties, and of all heretical creeds, infidels, and ungodly, immoral, worldly, and unconverted men, uniting in opposing decided and vital godliness, and even sometimes all public acknowledgment of the kingdom of Christ. If they can agree in nothing else, they agree in this. Thus it was in the time of Nehemiah: "It came to pass that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together, to come, and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." Thus, too, David\* complained of the motley group of God's and Israel's ene-

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 5.

mies: "They have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagarenes; Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot." How sinful and dangerous such friendships, which may very soon pass into bitter enmity, and which, if persevered in during life, must terminate at death, and pass into the misery of mutual hatred and recrimination for ever!\*

Let us beware of all such combinations for evil. Whatever may seem to be their first success, they cannot be ultimately prosperous or safe. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."—"Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces:" "take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word and it shall not stand; for God is with us." However many make war with the Lamb, "the Lamb shall overcome them." Let every one of us, then, say, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

Nay, let us, from the combinations of the wicked, learn a lesson of mutual agreement and co-operation as Christians. Let us "leave off strife before it be meddled with:" let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren. And should any alienation of affection unhappily arise, let us seek to have the breach healed. Let us study to preserve, or to restore, our friendships, not by renouncing, or opposing, but by obeying the truth. Let us associate, for good, in things wherein we are agreed. "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything we be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto us. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." If we thus prudently and affectionately co-operate in exertion and prayer, we shall both do much good to others, and get much good to ourselves. "If two of you shall agree on earth," says our Lord, "as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

\* Scott.

## LECTURE CXXV.

## LUKE XXIII. 13-25.

“ And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). 20. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

“ And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.” In the last lecture, we considered how Jesus conducted himself, when brought before Pilate for examination—how Pilate, glad of the prospect of shifting the cause from himself, sent him to Herod—and how Herod, instead of passing, or recommending, any sentence against him as a dangerous person, treated him contumeliously, and sent him back to Pilate. And now, Pilate, while it was yet but morning, immediately assembled the priests, and counsellors, and such of the people as joined in accusing Jesus, and solemnly repeated his verdict of his innocence, as he had formerly given it in

the 4th verse of this chapter. He declared that his accusers had failed to bring home any crime to him, and, therefore, that he (Pilate) could not, in conscience, condemn him. In addition to this, he now stated that his judgment in the case was confirmed by that of Herod, to whom he had sent Jesus and his accusers; and Herod's opinion was entitled to great weight, as he was well versed in the Jewish religion and customs, and as he had immediate jurisdiction over Galilee, in which Jesus spent the most part of his time. The clause, "Nothing worthy of death is done *unto* him," not only may, but should, be rendered, as in the marginal reading of some of our Bibles, "Nothing worthy of death is done *by* him."\* How, then, should Pilate have acted in these circumstances? and what conduct did consistency with his own declared opinion require? He ought, certainly, at once, to have set Jesus at liberty. But what was his proposal?

*"I will, therefore, chastise him, and release him."* Strange, unjust, and cruel! Why chastise him? The person in whom there was no fault at all should have been subjected to no punishment at all. This was a vain attempt, on the part of the governor, to compromise between the demand of his own conscience, and the demand of the persecuting Jews. He was so far checked by his conscience as not to propose Christ's death, and he so far yielded to the Jews as to resolve to scourge him. He hoped that that would satisfy the Jews, and that they would be persuaded that, after such treatment, Jesus, when set at liberty, would take care not to offend by his preaching, nor to give any cause of suspicion, either to the civil or ecclesiastical rulers. Pilate failed, however, in both these objects; for his own conscience could not approve, and the Jews were by no means satisfied. He proposed, after chastising or scourging Jesus, to set him at liberty.

*"For of necessity he must release one unto them at the*

\* Πιπταγμῶν αὐτῶν, without the preposition. Though somewhat uncommon, instances of this occur in Greek; and it is much more natural to understand it thus here, than to suppose that the passing of a capital sentence, or anything done by Herod to Christ, should be called a thing deserving death on Christ's part. Polybius says Hermias finished his life in this way, undergoing a punishment by no means equal to the things done by him, that is, as his crimes deserved, οὐδὲ μὲν ὑποσχάνετο τιμωρίαν ἀξίαν τῶν αὐτῶν πιπταγμῶν. And Josephus, at the end of his life, written by himself, says, "These are the things done by me during (or the actions of) my whole life:"—Ταῦτά μιν τὰ πιπταγμῶν μου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου ἔστιν.



*feast.*" Or, as in Matthew,\* "Now, at that feast, the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would;" and, according to Mark, "One prisoner, whomsoever they desired." There could hardly be any law requiring this; but custom and general expectation rendered it, in a certain sense, necessary. We have no account of how this practice came to be first observed at the feast of the passover: when it is considered, however, that it has been usual for supreme rulers to set prisoners at liberty, to remit penalties, and to show other marks of grace, on their accession to power, on their birth-day, and on occasions of great national rejoicing, it is easy to suppose how the practice in question came to be connected with the most solemn of the Jewish feasts. This must have been a very popular custom; and more especially so, as the people had the choice of the person who was to be the object of clemency. Mark says that "the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire Pilate to do as he had ever done unto them." Matthew tells us that Pilate then gave them a choice between two persons, saying, "Whom will ye that I release unto you?—Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?" In fact, to name these two together, whose character and desert were so very different, was plainly to suggest that Jesus should be released. Though Pilate ought not to have exposed Jesus to such jeopardy, he hoped that he would thus escape; and he must have seen that, if he should succeed in saving Christ's life by this proposal, he would succeed in the way of yielding to the prejudices and the envy of the Jews, inasmuch as Jesus would be released, not as an innocent person acquitted, but as a criminal pardoned; and this would have been very dishonouring to our Lord.

"*And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas; (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)*" Matthew calls him "a notable," or notorious, prisoner. He had been guilty of insurrection and murder; and, as John mentions, was also "a robber." This man was in prison, and richly deserved to be put to death. How astonishing the preference of the multitude! Into what extremes of iniquitous absurdity will not blind envy and perverseness hurry their victims! What a sudden change, too, in the multitude! The individuals were, probably, partly the same, and partly different; but the multitude,

\* Matt. xxvii. 15; Mark xv. 6.

as such, only a few days before welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with hosannas and blessings, and now they cry, "Away with him!" How little is the breath of mere popularity to be depended on, at any time! The sudden change at this time was to be accounted for, partly from the circumstance of the chief priests and elders "moving and persuading the people" to take part against Christ. Yet the people were not therefore blameless. The cry, "Away with him!" signified their wish to have him put to death. So the enemies of Paul exclaimed,\* "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." This conduct towards the Son of God was the great crime of which Peter afterwards accused the Jews,† in these impassioned words, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life."

"*Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.*" This may be considered as the second attempt of Pilate to deliver Christ; and, in making it, he probably urged the multitude to reflect well on what they were doing in preferring an abandoned rebel, robber, and murderer, to an innocent man. "*But*" they still persisted in their demand, and "*cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.*" They not only called for his death, but pointed out the kind of death they wished him to die, and that was the most painful and ignominious death of the cross. "By this cry, they declared the greatest degree of rage that can be imagined; for, it was as if they had said, Let him whom you call our king, be treated like one of the vilest of your slaves, who has committed the most enormous crime. To have inflicted such a punishment as this on any (other) free Jew, would probably have been sufficient to have thrown the whole city and nation into an uproar; but now they were deaf to everything but the clamour of passion, and in their madness forgot with how dangerous a precedent they might furnish the Roman governor. And, indeed, it turned dreadfully on themselves, when so vast numbers of them were crucified for their opposition to the Romans, during the time of their last war."‡

\* Acts xxii. 22.

† Acts iii. 13.

‡ Doddridge.

"And he said unto them the third time, *Why? what evil hath he done?*" This question might well have staggered them; but they were not to be wrought on by any appeal to justice or mercy. Instead of doing evil, Jesus "went about doing good." It was a cutting question which he formerly put to the Jews, when he said, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of those works do ye stone me?" Pilate again declared his belief of Christ's innocence, saying, "*I have found no cause of death in him:*" yet, with strange inconsistency, he again said, "*I will therefore chastise him, and let him go:*"—he proposed to scourge him, though innocent, before setting him at liberty. "*And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified; and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*" Without attempting to answer Pilate's question, or refute his argument, they determined to carry their point by noise and violence. The more he expressed his unwillingness, "they cried out the more exceedingly, *Let him be crucified;*" and the result was that they prevailed with the governor, contrary to his own sense of justice.

Let us here advert to the extraordinary circumstance mentioned in Matthew xxvii. 19: "When Pilate was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." The subject of dreams is at once very interesting and very difficult. Though we ought to guard against the extreme of credulity, we ought not to be so sceptical as to doubt that God sometimes employs even dreams to accomplish his own purposes. Speaking of the different methods which God employs to impress men's minds, and to keep them back from sin and destruction, Elihu says,\* "God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Elihu may refer, partly, to those miraculous dreams and visions, which, at that early period, when little if any written revelation existed, were necessary, and, probably, not uncommon. And yet, his words cannot be thus limited, as he speaks of dreams being of use to the persons themselves, in

\* Job xxxiii. 14.

the way of keeping them from sin. But how shall we go far enough here, and yet not too far? Undoubtedly, the great majority of dreams are vague, airy, and unaccountable vanities. Their very vanity, however, should be improved to lead men to seek something more substantial, and more edifying. Thus speaks the wise man, "In the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities; but fear thou God."\* All dreams, however, are not so unaccountable, for many of them arise from what engages the mind during the day: "A dream cometh through the multitude of business."† Nor are all dreams so destitute of instruction in themselves, or unimportant in their results. God is not to be limited in the mode of his working; he may use this mode, as well as any other. However proper it may be to put a rein on our fancy, it would be unreasonable and unscriptural to hold any opinion which would shut out the Lord God from all agency in this way. In illustration of this mode of God's working, we might quote the dreams of Abimelech, Laban, Jacob, Joseph, and others. Surely the vision of Eliphaz was eminently calculated to make a good impression on his own mind, and is still calculated to make a good impression on the mind of every one who considers it. "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image stood before mine eyes; there was silence—and I heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly; how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!" It is quite conceivable, and rational to believe, that in some cases, in which we do not suppose there is anything miraculous, or, strictly speaking, prophetic, or even very extraordinary, good may result from dreams, if we only make due allowance for the natural working of the human mind, and for the ordinary providence and grace of God. Suppose a man should dream that he was drowned in crossing a river, and next day should actually cross that river in safety, it would be too much to say that his dream was

\* Eccles. v. 7.

† Eccles. v. 3.

useless and vain, for it may have been the means of exciting that caution which preserved his life; or, if he was indeed in any danger, it may have been the means of turning his attention more effectually to the escape he made, and of deepening his gratitude. Suppose, again, that a man should dream, himself, that he was in danger of committing some crime, or should be told, as a warning, that a friend had had such a dream concerning him, it would be a mark, not of a weak, but of a wise man, to be very much on his guard against the crime in question; and, if he should fall into that crime, he would be more to blame than if he had had no such warning. With regard to the dream under consideration, we have, simply, the two statements that Pilate's wife had the dream, and that she told it to her husband; and we are not informed how far it was out of the ordinary course of nature; but when the great importance of the circumstances is considered, it is natural to regard this dream as the result of special divine suggestion. In the morning of that day, she had had a very distressing dream, probably referring to the cruelties exercised and meditated against Christ, and to the calamities which would befall those who had a hand in his death. She seems to have known something of what was passing, and of the attempts making to prevail on Pilate to take part against him; and, as duty and kind attention required, she warned her husband of the danger, and entreated him to do nothing against that just person. At all events, this was another testimony to the innocence of our Lord, given in a solemn manner, while Pilate was sitting as judge. We are not told how Pilate turned off this warning. He may have laughed at it, as the result of silly fear, though he could hardly do that, considering his own misgivings. Faithless to his own convictions, and regardless of this caution, he was driven on by the incensed multitude, whose urgency prevailed.

And now, Pilate adopted another, and a still more striking way of declaring that Jesus was a good man, and that he was not to blame for his death.\* "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." This action was a natural way of expressing innocence, and also of denoting the washing

\* Matt. xxvii. 24.

away of any guilt which might adhere to a person.\* It was enjoined by the law of Moses, in the case of uncertain murder; as we find in the 21st chapter of Deuteronomy. Hence, too, the language of the Psalmist, "I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." But, did this action clear Pilate? By no means. If he had really acted as he ought, he would have been free from blame; but it was absurd, and utterly vain in him, to protest that he was innocent of Christ's blood, when he was consenting to its being shed. He failed to interpose his authority to preserve Christ's life; and, therefore, he was guilty. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" But Pilate did worse than forbear to deliver Jesus—he was so weak and so wicked as to condemn him; still more evident, therefore, is it, that he was answerable for the consequences. He flattered himself that the guilt lay entirely with others. But guilt is not so easily transferred. There never was a real transference of guilt but one; and, in that case, he to whom the transference was made had no guilt of his own. The Lord will not accept the responsibility of one sinner for another, any more than a creditor will accept the security of one bankrupt for another. The priests endeavoured to lay the blame entirely on Judas, and now Pilate sought to lay the blame entirely on the priests and the multitude; but they were all guilty together. The symbolical action, and the words accompanying it, implied that Pilate considered the Jews at least as chiefly responsible; and though he could not thereby be cleared, they immediately undertook to be answerable for the consequences of Christ's death. So infatuated were they, and so convinced that there was neither sin nor danger in the case, that they readily agreed to abide the result. "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." Awful impre-

\* Among the other ceremonies at a solemn league, Homer (*Iliad*. iii. 270) says, "They poured water on the hands of the kings,"

— *Ἄσπε βασιλευσιν ὕδαρ ἐπὶ χυρμαί χυρμαί.*

"Tu genitor, cape sacra manu, patriosque penates.  
Me, bello e tanto digressum et cæde recenti,  
Attrectare nefas, donec me flumine vivo  
Abluero." — *Æneid*, II. 717.

cation! How tremendous the temporal judgments which soon befell them as a nation, and which continue to press on them to the present day! Far more dreadful still is the thought that those murderers of the Son of God who repented not, and obtained not forgiveness through his blood, perished for ever. The cry of the rabble prevailed.

"*And,*" Luke adds, "*Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.*" This was anything but the deliberate verdict of justice. It was extorted by violence, and yielded by wicked pliancy, in despite of conviction.

But here several affecting circumstances, which are omitted by Luke, may be supplied. It was the custom of the Romans to scourge persons before crucifying them;\* and this custom was cruelly followed in the case of the holy Jesus. The other three evangelists expressly state that he was scourged by Pilate, that is, by Pilate's order; and in this, as in other cases, the scourging would be a very severe punishment, to the effusion of blood, and the cutting and laceration of the body. Jesus was thus scourged in the open outer court, in the sight, and, doubtless, highly to the gratification, of his persecutors. After this, he was taken into the prætorium, and there subjected to various indignities and cruelties, in mockery of his claim as a king. The following is Matthew's account of this part of the appalling history: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head." While these impious atrocities were perpetrating, Pilate must have been very uneasy; and, though he had passed sentence against our Lord, he thought that if he were shown to the multitude in his now abused condition, they would relent. Here Pilate makes his fourth attempt to save Christ's life. He resolves to carry him out a spectacle which might be enough to soften the hardest heart; and, that the effect might be stronger, he resolved to go and speak to the people himself. In the words of John,† "Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple

\* Josephus, Wars, II. xiv. 9.

† John xix. 4.

robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" As if he had said, "See his wretched condition. Have you no compassion? Is not this enough?" But this appeal to their pity was in vain. Lest the multitude should relent, those who were at their head took the lead in renewed calls for Christ's crucifixion. "When the chief priests and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him." On this, Pilate, somewhat irritated by their obstinacy, told them that if they were determined to have Jesus crucified, they must crucify him themselves. "Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him." But the Jews would not undertake to crucify him themselves, afraid, no doubt, of the odium and responsibility which they would incur, should they put to death a person whom many of their countrymen believed to be the Messiah, and whom the Roman governor had declared to be innocent. In this dilemma, they bethought themselves of another plea, and asserted that Jesus, at all events, deserved to die according to one of the laws of Moses. "We have a law," said they, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God"—alluding to the law against blasphemers and false prophets,\* and taking it for granted that his claim was false. "When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he was the more afraid," either lest he should be obliged to yield to their demand in order to avoid an insurrection, or, lest Jesus should really be a divine person, whom it would be extremely impious and dangerous to crucify.

Following still John's account, we find that Pilate, resolving to act cautiously, went again into the judgment hall with Jesus, to examine him once more, apart from the Jews, and "said unto him, Whence art thou?" With the confused notions of a heathen, he wished to know Christ's origin; that is, probably, whether he was of heaven, or of earth, of the gods, or of men. "But Jesus," knowing that "the hour was come," and that Pilate had already yielded so far, and would yield entirely to the Jews, "gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." This gentle and respectful reply (in which our Lord asserted the doctrine of providence, and, though

\* Lev. xxiv. 16; Deut. xviii. 20.



he did not exculpate Pilate, yet declared that the guilt of the high priest with his associates was much greater, inasmuch as a Jew had better means of judging than a Gentile) so affected Pilate as to lead him to make a fifth attempt to alter the purpose of the persecutors. "And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews," perceiving that Pilate was still bent on setting him at liberty, "cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Here, at last, they found what Pilate had not courage to withstand. Roman historians show that the reigning emperor, Tiberius, was always most suspicious of the fidelity of those who were under him, and often visited unsupported accusations of disaffection with instant death. The very thought of being accused of disloyalty filled Pilate with dismay. "When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat," "and saith unto the Jews, Behold your king! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he him, therefore, unto them to be crucified;" or, as it is in Luke,

*"And Pilate gave sentence, that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will."* How shockingly and perversely criminal this decision! "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord;" and here both these crimes were committed at once. Barabbas was let loose to do more mischief, and to harden in his crimes; and the holy Jesus was barbarously given up to the will of those who thirsted for his blood.

Let us now take an improving glance at what is here exhibited of the character of the three principal parties concerned—Pontius Pilate, the Jewish rulers and multitude, and Jesus Christ.

1. *Pilate.* In him judges and magistrates may behold, in several respects, a beacon. He seemed, it is true, to observe, in some things, the forms of justice; but he soon disregarded both its forms and its substance; and he allowed himself to be prevailed on by malicious importunity, and to be borne away by violence, instead of being guided by evidence, and maintaining the cause that was just. He

yielded to the influence of the high, and the clamours of the low, so as to scourge, nay, to condemn to death, an innocent and most excellent person. Every judge ought to attend to the words of the Lord, by Moses, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment." Firmness and integrity are absolutely necessary in the administration of justice, both to give right decisions at first, and also to adhere to them, whatever may be the consequences.

But Pilate is, in some respects, a beacon to us all. Let it be an instructive warning to us, to see him appearing desirous to do right, but soon going so far wrong—acting contrary to his conscience, in scourging, though he could not at first bring himself to crucify Christ, and vainly attempting to clear himself by casting the blame on others, till he is at last wrought on to perpetrate a kind of legal murder. Let us study, not only to mean well, but to do well; not only to begin right, but to continue faithful and conscientious. Let us not yield to sin in any degree, lest we fall completely under its power. Let us not venture on any step against Christ, lest we at last go every length. Let us ever remember the folly of protesting against evil and yet practising it. Let us not imagine, as many seem to do, that we ourselves are not to blame, if we can affix any blame on others; but let us rest assured that "every man must bear his own burden." Let us not aim at any compromise between duty and sin, Christ and the world, God and mammon; but let us be decided for the truth. If we attempt two objects so incompatible, we shall certainly come short of the better part, and, in all probability, fail in both. "Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." But soon the same Felix was accused by the same Jews, and disgraced, and narrowly escaped with his life. As for Pilate, his cruelties soon rendered him odious and intolerable to the Jews, whom he now sacrificed his conscience to gratify; he was deposed by Vitellius, pro-consul of Syria, and sent off to Rome, to give an account of his mal-administration to Tiberius Cæsar. That emperor died before Pilate arrived at Rome; but Caligula, the next emperor, banished him to Vienne, in Gaul, where he was reduced to the greatest extremities, and laid violent hands on himself.\*

2. Let us reflect on the conduct of *the priests and rulers, and Jewish multitude*, and beware of resembling them.

\* Jos. Antiq. XVIII. iv. 1, 2; Euseb. ii. 7.

They denied the Holy One and the Just, and preferred a murderer. Let us beware of denying the Saviour, either in words or by our works. Jude uses words, with regard to some in an after period of the Church, which might be applied to some in our own days: "There are certain men crept in unawares"—"ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." If we deny him, he will also deny us; but, if we confess him before men, he will confess us before his Father and the holy angels. We are ready to stand amazed at the perverse conduct of the Jews; but let us remember that enmity to Christ, and his religion, and people, is a ruling passion in all ungodly men. They will forego much to gratify it, and will trample on justice and decorum to gain their object. Sometimes they plainly prefer the notoriously irreligious, who are Christ's enemies, to the pious, who are his friends; and what is that but to say, "Away with him; not this man, but Barabbas"? Let us examine ourselves carefully as to this matter; and if we discover in ourselves anything of this spirit, let us tremble lest we be treated at last as Christ's murderers, and be left with the guilt of his blood resting on us for ever.

*Finally.* Let us take an improving view of *the Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is here presented to our contemplation. Let us realize the appearance he made when, bringing him forth before the multitude, Pilate said, "Behold the man!" Let us, with an eye of retrospective faith, look on him as "he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," "as he hid not his face from shame and spitting," as he wore the thorny crown on his head, and bore the reedy sceptre in his hand. We see, not only the man, but the Son of God, thus insulted and abused. How amazing! Let us behold the sight with adoring admiration, affectionate sympathy, and lively gratitude. How pleasing to contrast this mournful sight with his consequent exaltation! especially to contrast it with the glory of his second appearance! Beholding him with the eye of prospective faith, we say, There he comes, not to stand trial himself, but to sit in judgment on all. And how different his appearance from that which he presented when he stood before Pilate and the Jews! A glorious effulgence adorns those temples which were then crowned with thorns; unspeakable majesty shines in that visage which was then more marred than that of any man; the reed has become the

sceptre of universal sway, and the robe of mock-royalty waves majestic in folds of light. Let us also reflect again on the repeated attestations given to the perfect innocence of this blessed Sufferer. Here we have a proof of the vicarious nature of his sufferings. He suffered, not for his own sin, but for ours. "He suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."—"Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:" "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Let us not only mark, but imitate, his innocence, in as far as we can. Let us resemble him in freedom from crime; that, if we suffer publicly, we may not deserve it. It will be well if, as against our Master, no crime can be brought against us, save by false accusation. It will be well if those who seek our hurt be reduced to the necessity of saying of us, as the enemies of the "man greatly beloved" of old said of him, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Let us admire, too, the composure, patience, and fortitude, which our Lord displayed during this trying scene. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Here, too, let us imitate, as well as admire him. Trials of various kinds are to be expected for his sake; let us not, therefore, think it strange if they should fall on us with considerable sharpness; but let us be prepared to bear them with fortitude. "If when we do well, and suffer for it, we take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: for even hereunto were we called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."—"Lord, if thou callest us out to share in thy sufferings, may the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon us! And may neither the scorn nor the rage of our enemies separate us from thee, who didst so courageously bear all this for us; nor may they ever sink us into any weakness of behaviour unworthy of those who have the honour to call themselves thy followers!"\*

\* Doddridge.

## LECTURE CXXVI.

## LUKE XXIII. 26-31.

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. 27. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

THE importunate clamour of the Jewish priests and rabble having prevailed with Pilate, contrary to his conviction, to pronounce sentence against Christ, and to deliver him to their will, we are told, in the beginning of the passage now read, that "*they led him away.*" It is clear, from the combined account of the evangelists, both that the Jews, by urging on the death of Jesus, were guilty of his murder, and also that, in consequence of Pilate's sentence following up that of the Sanhedrim, the Roman soldiers were the actual executioners of the sentence. According to his own prediction,\* the chief priests and scribes condemned him to death, and delivered him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him. Matthew and Mark† mention that, before leading him away, they, the soldiers, took the mock robe off from him, and clothed him in his own raiment. There is nothing said of their taking off the crown of thorns; hence, it is commonly supposed that he was crucified with it upon his head. In order to avoid precipitance, the effect of which, however lamentable, cannot be recalled, and also to afford opportunity of preparing for death, it has been usual, in most countries, to allow some time to elapse before carrying capital sentences into execution. There was a decree of the Roman senate enact-

\* Matt. xx. 18.

† Matt. xxvii. 31; Mark xv. 20.

ing that the punishment of condemned persons should be deferred till the tenth day after their conviction.\* Pilate, though now pretending to proceed according to Roman law, did not interfere. As for the Jews, they betrayed the most indecent haste to obtain the gratification of their malice, and united with the soldiers in hurrying off our Lord to crucifixion. The Saviour offered no resistance; he submitted cheerfully, and was "led as a lamb to the slaughter."

It was the custom of the Sicilians, Ephesians, Romans, and other nations, to execute capital sentences without the gates of their cities.† This was observed among the Jews by divine appointment. The blasphemer was stoned without the camp. "They carried Naboth forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died."—"And they cast Stephen out of the city, and stoned him." The crucifixion of our Lord without the city of Jerusalem, was typified by the burning of the bullock without the camp, according to the explanation given in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xiii. 11: "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burnt without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."‡ They led him away, out of the city, towards the usual place of execution.

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." It was the custom of the Romans to compel every criminal to carry to the place of execution the cross, or gibbet,§ on which he was to suffer. Plutarch refers to this custom in the following illustration of the evil consequences of vice: "Every kind of wickedness produces its own particular torment, just as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, carries his own cross." Some think that the criminal carried the whole cross; others, that the whole being too heavy, he carried only the cross beam.|| Accordingly, on this occasion, it was Christ himself who carried the cross at first; for John (xix. 17) says, "And he, bearing his cross, went forth." So Isaac bore the wood

\* "Senatus consulto cautum ut pœna damnatorum in decimum semper diem differretur."—*Sueton., Vita Tiber. 75.*

† Lardner's Cred. Part I.

‡ Numb. xv. 36; 1 Kings xxi. 13; Acts vii. 58; Ex. xxix. 14.

§ "Furca," hence "furcifer," and sometimes "crucifer."

|| Antenna.

which was intended to be used when he himself was to be offered up for a burnt-offering. But the burden, we may suppose, becoming too heavy for Christ, those who were leading him away, not from kindness, but from eagerness to get him quickly to the fatal spot, meeting this Simon, seized him, and made him either carry the cross alone, or assist Jesus in carrying it. Matthew's account of the circumstance is this: "As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross." Cyrene was a city of Libya, in Africa. It was of such note as to contend for superiority, in some points, with Carthage. In profane authors, it is celebrated as the birth-place of the philosopher Eratosthenes, and the poet Callimachus. It is repeatedly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read of many strangers being in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, from "the parts of Libya about Cyrene"—of Cyrenians disputing with Stephen—of some men of Cyrene preaching the Lord Jesus at Antioch—and, particularly, of Lucius of Cyrene as one of the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch.\* There appear to have been a great many Jews at Cyrene, of whom, part embraced the gospel, and the rest violently opposed it. Mark states that this Simon was "the father of Alexander and Rufus," evidently implying that these two men were well known to the disciples. Persons of the same names are mentioned afterwards; and, though it is not certain, it is probable, that they were the same men.† If Alexander and Rufus, whom Mark mentions, were disciples of Christ, as it is almost unavoidable to conclude, it is most likely that their father Simon was a disciple also. If our Lord's enemies knew, or suspected him to be one of his followers, their imposing this burden on him would be intended as a reproach; and it would be a great trial to a disciple even to be compelled to become the unwilling instrument in forwarding his Lord's crucifixion, though, it is to be remembered, that where there is absolute compulsion, there can be no moral blame.

This passage in our Master's history teaches us that we should expect and be prepared to bear trials, or crosses, for his sake. "If any man will come after me," says he, "let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." Were we called to it, we must undergo death itself, rather than deny him. Though there may be no probability of our being exposed to the more violent kinds of persecution,

\* Acts ii. 10, vi. 9, xi. 20, xiii. 1. † Acts xix. 33; Rom. xvi. 13.

we cannot escape less severe kinds of it, if our conduct be decidedly Christian. Let us be like Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." This is the very improvement which the apostle Paul teaches us to make of this part of the evangelical history; for, after what he writes to the Hebrews, as already quoted, respecting Christ having suffered without the gate, he immediately adds, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

*"And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him."* It is well known that crowds of people are drawn together by whatever produces strong excitement, whether it be of a pleasant or painful nature, and, in particular, that the shocking sight of a public execution has generally many spectators, especially if the person who is to suffer have previously attracted much attention. Of the multitude who now went out after Jesus, we are sure that there were many who followed him with delight at the thought of his being put to death. It is likely that there were some present from mere curiosity. It appears, however, that there were not a few who now accompanied him with far other feelings. Though the clamour of a multitude prevailed to obtain sentence against our Lord, he had many friends in Jerusalem; and of these, many now went forth deeply commiserating his situation, and shocked at the treatment he was receiving. After Jesus was betrayed and seized in the garden, all the twelve disciples forsook him and fled. Peter soon regained as much courage as to follow him afar off; and though he was guilty of denying him, he probably manifested proper resolution after his repentance. It will afterwards be seen that John witnessed our Lord's crucifixion; whether any more of the apostles were present at that dreadful scene does not appear. We are distinctly informed, however, that many of his disciples of the other sex now attended on him. In describing the crucifixion, Mark says,\* "There were also women looking on afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joseph, and Salome; (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him,) and many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem." The deep anxiety they felt in this case overcame the natural timidity and the retiring habits of their sex; and the heavy grief they felt, and

\* Mark xv. 40.



the passionate lamentations they uttered, as he was leading out to be crucified, were just what might have been expected, and were altogether worthy of believing and affectionate females. And now, though it might have been supposed that, at such a crisis, his thoughts would have been entirely occupied with his own sufferings, he takes an interest in the sorrows of others, and addresses these women in the most benevolent and gracious manner.

*"But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* He does not disdain their sympathy; on the contrary, he evidently takes it well. When he says, "Weep not for me," he is to be understood, not absolutely, but comparatively, according to a frequent form of expression in Scripture. His sufferings were, without doubt, in themselves very dreadful, and a just cause of grief to those who loved him. But there were various circumstances to alleviate the grief they were calculated to excite. They were to be but of short duration. The result was to be glorious for himself: "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame," and was soon "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The result was, also, to be most blessed to ransomed sinners. His death was to be the chief means of his triumph over his enemies, and of the salvation of his people. There was, therefore, something altogether peculiar in it, and, properly understood, it was not to be lamented over as that of any ordinary friend. He advertises the women of what rather called for their sorrow; and, in doing so, he addresses them more as part of the guilty nation, than as the very individuals who themselves were, generally speaking, to suffer in their persons, or in their children. No doubt, some then present would so suffer; but the Christians were preserved by the providence of God from the sword and the famine which devoured so many of the unbelieving Jews. Even those who escaped, however, must have felt deeply for the calamities of their fellow-countrymen. Our Lord here referred, directly, to the calamities which their national guilt, more especially, the guilt of his blood, was to bring on them, in the just judgment of God, and by the instrumentality of the Romans; and he referred, ultimately, to the still more direful misery which would overwhelm those of them who should die in their sins; and he intimated to the women that they had more occasion to weep on account

of all these miseries than on his account. In like manner, though we ought certainly to grieve over the sufferings of Christ, we should remember that their history may excite the melting emotions of natural feeling, where there is no spiritual, no religious affection. Our grief for him cannot be of a right kind, for example, if it do not include grief for ourselves, grief for our sins which rendered his sufferings necessary. When we have, by faith, a right view of him going forth to Calvary, or hanging on the cross, it will always be accompanied with penitence, according to the words of the Lord by Zechariah: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." We should also deeply mourn for those who, by rejecting Christ and his salvation, are exposing themselves to misery. Our Lord himself exemplified this tender compassion when, as "he came near and beheld the city" of Jerusalem, he "wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." These are causes of grief indeed. But, as for the sufferings of the Redeemer, taken in connection with their saving results, it is plain that they are rather a cause of joy to us, and, if duly improved and rested on, will greatly refresh the contrite soul. The spirit of this verse seems also fitted to remind us that, though the removal of our friends by death is a just cause of sorrow, yet, if they die in the Lord, there is less reason to grieve for them than for ourselves, and for those who are left behind, exposed to all the cares and dangers of the world.

Our Lord then specifies the reason why these women should weep: "*For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.*" Having formerly considered the calamities which the Jews underwent in their last war with the Romans and the siege of Jerusalem, we shall only notice here what is quite necessary to the point before us. Christ had said before, "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days."\* Such would be peculiarly ill calculated

\* Luke xxi. 23.

to bear the personal and relative distresses of the time. Many mothers then "brought forth children to the murderer." Then, too, the prophecy was fulfilled, "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children." The distress of many mothers must also have been dreadful in seeing their children die of pestilence and famine, or carried captive into foreign lands. So, they were comparatively happy who, being childless, were free from such causes of suffering. How uncertain are all earthly comforts, as they are usually called! How uncertain is it whether they are really to prove comforts or not! The very persons and things which we are ready to regard as our chief consolations and joys may prove our heaviest trials and bitterest woes. The more connexions any one has, the more vulnerable points has he. Better far to be childless, than to be the parents of undutiful and wicked children, who, if not made monuments of God's displeasure, by heavy calamities in this life, become heirs of endless misery.

"*Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*" "Then," at that time, the time of their war with the Romans. They shall *begin*, but shall not soon cease, to say, as in these despairing accents. After an enumeration of calamities which were to precede the close siege of Jerusalem, our Lord added,\* "All these are the beginning of sorrows." It is not necessary to suppose that any of the Jews employed the exact words here mentioned, though it may have been so; for this is a strongly figurative way of expressing the extreme consternation into which they would be thrown, and their desire to escape, by any means, from the increasing miseries which would press on them. Somewhat in the same way, a man has been heard to say, "I could have sunk under the ground," or, "into the earth," or, "I could have wished to have been buried out of sight." Similar expressions are used to denote the awful calamities which were to befall the Israelites on account of their idolatry, in Hos. x: 8, to which there is, probably, a reference in the verse before us: "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." So also, in the prophecy of the judgments which were to happen on the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. vi. 15), it is said, "They hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the

\* Matt. xxiv.

mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" How terribly the prediction we are now considering was fulfilled in the instance primarily referred to by our Lord, we found, when considering the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Many of its devoted inhabitants declared that they were to be envied who had fallen in the early part of the siege, and would gladly have been hid, or even crushed to death under mountains, to escape the lingering miseries that oppressed them.

More generally, this language is very descriptive of the consternation into which ungodly men are thrown, when calamities overtake them in this life, and they are left without resource. In this view, and that we may be prepared to bear, if we cannot escape, calamity, let us see that we have our trust in God's providence and grace. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." But, as the destruction of Jerusalem was an emblem of the day of judgment, this language is also applicable to that dread event in which we are all interested. We shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. How gladly would the wicked then shelter themselves anywhere! The darkest pit of despair would be welcome to them, if it could hide them from the face of an angry God and a rejected Saviour. Annihilation itself would be welcome, that, with their being, their sorrow might cease. But there will be no place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. There will be no shelter for those who have not before taken shelter in God's mercy through the Redeemer. Let none, from foolhardiness, now despise this warning; for, when the Lord comes, the stoutest heart will tremble. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" saith the Lord. Let us all take timely thought of this, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel; that, in the last day, when unbelievers shall call in vain to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and cover them, we may lift our heads with

joyful confidence, because our final redemption draweth nigh.

In the last verse which we propose to consider at present, our Lord goes on to infer, from his own sufferings, the dreadful misery of the finally impenitent: "*For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*" The general meaning of this proverb can hardly escape any who read or hear it; but its great force and awakening tendency may be more fully understood and felt if the following circumstances be considered. When, in cutting down trees, men do not spare those which are green and thriving, and full of leaves and fruit, is it to be expected that they will leave untouched, or rather, must we not conclude that they will not hesitate to cut down, those which are leafless, and withered? And, farther, the fire that consumes up green wood will burn up dry with a most vehement flame. Such is the foundation in nature, and, literally, for this proverb. But, again, men are compared to trees in Scripture. As a tree is known by its fruit, so is a man by his works. The righteous man is compared to a flourishing and fruitful tree: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." He is compared to "a green olive-tree," and a "green fir tree." God's people are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." On the other hand, Eliphaz says of the wicked man, "His branch shall not be green; he shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive;" and Jude calls certain ungodly men "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." Thus, too, the figurative language of John the Baptist: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." In Ezek. xx. 47, we read, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree;" and this figurative language is thus explained, five verses farther on: "I will cut off the righteous and the wicked." The green tree, then, is the righteous, and the dry tree is the wicked. In the passage before us, Jesus, by the green tree, means himself; and, by the dry tree, the wicked Jews: and this is as if he had said, "If these sinners of Jerusalem bring such distress upon

me, who am innocent and have deserved no evil at their hands, how dreadfully will it be repaid upon themselves, who are laden with iniquity, as fuel fully prepared for wrath! If the Romans are suffered, by the instigation of these Jews, thus to abuse me, and put me to death, who have never done anything to offend them, what fury will not God suffer them, and even stir them up, to show, in the just punishment of this people, who will provoke both him and them! And, if divine justice proceed with such severity against me, who have no guilt of my own, but am only come to be a sacrifice for the sins of others, what will become of those heinous transgressors themselves, whose iniquities will be upon their own heads, through their rejecting me!"\* Unpardoned and obstinate sinners are as proper a subject for divine wrath as dry wood for the fire: they are "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction."

But this saying is of far more general application; for it is true, not only of these Jews, but of all wicked men. If the holy Jesus suffered, how certain and how awful the punishment of the ungodly! Similar to this reasoning is that of the apostle Peter: "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" A strong argument for the final destruction of the impenitent arises from the sufferings of Christ's people, and the frequent prosperity of the wicked, in this life. Shall it all along, and ultimately, fare better with God's enemies than with his friends? Will He who afflicts his own beloved children spare his neglecters and despisers? If the members of his own household suffer, shall aliens escape? If those who obey the gospel are chastised, shall they who obey it not be unpunished? If the Lord thus deal with those who, notwithstanding much imperfection, are renewed in the spirit of their mind, changed in a good degree into his own image, delighting in his law after the inward man, on the whole observant of his commandments, and often found at his footstool, will he always bear with those who are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, who have no resemblance to him, who wilfully and habitually violate his laws, and who, instead of seeking his face, say as effectually to him as actions can say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" If he smite the contrite into deeper contrition, will he never

\* Dr Guyse.

smite the proud? If he scourge those who esteem his favour to be life, and his loving-kindness to be better than life, will he never reckon with those of whom he says, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me"? If a God of mercy, in his mercy, pain the heart that loves him, will a God of justice, in his justice, not abandon at last to its merited fate the heart that hates him? Strong, however, as this argument is when it is drawn from the sufferings of Christ's people, it is much stronger when it is drawn from the sufferings of Christ himself. The question is, indeed, overwhelming, when he puts it concerning his own case, and that of the ungodly. "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" They who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." "What shall be done in the dry?" Our Lord himself answers the question, when he says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them up, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Stand in awe, then, of the judgments of God, ye who are as dry trees, ye who are spiritually lifeless and fruitless; stand in awe of God's judgments, and let the sufferings of his beloved Son cause you to tremble for yourselves. Do not congratulate yourselves on your present exemption from trouble; for that may be of short continuance. Do not altogether deprecate temporal suffering; for that might be to deprecate the very thing which, under God, would lead you to the Redeemer, and save you unspeakable suffering afterwards; that might be to resemble the demons who said, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" And do not suppose that, if God should lay his hand heavily upon you, anything you could suffer would be any satisfaction for your sins; but seek to God for pardon through the sufferings of his Son. Rest assured that, if you do not turn to the Lord in this way, you cannot escape the most fearful end. How can you escape if you neglect the great, the only salvation? But, if this vengeance come upon you, how will you be able to bear it? Woe unto you, if you continue lifeless and fruitless. You may, indeed, pass on quietly to the grave; but the more quietly, the less hope will there be in your end, and you will awake where no Saviour invites—no Spirit strives—no watchman lifts up the

voice—no ray of hope ever enters. Salvation, however, is now within your reach. Incline your ear, and come unto Christ: hear, and your souls shall live. God grant that we may be all savingly united to the Lord Jesus Christ, and abide in him who is the green tree, as the branch abides in the vine. Thus, because he lives, we shall live also, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. Thus, whatever sufferings may assail us here, they will be all from the hand of a reconciled and gracious Father; they will last but for a moment, and they will work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory: and thus shall we soon reach the place where, being altogether free from sin, we shall be subject to no trouble, where no tear shall any more bedim our eye, and no sigh shall any more ascend from our peaceful bosom.



## LECTURE CXXVII.

## LUKE XXIII. 32-34.

“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

As the enemies of our Lord, who had succeeded in obtaining a sentence of death against him, were leading him away to crucifixion, a great multitude accompanied him, from various motives, among whom were many women bewailing and lamenting him. On this, he kindly intimated to the women that they should rather grieve for the calamities that were soon to come on their infatuated country, than for his death; and took occasion to infer from his own sufferings the certainty and the dreadful nature of the punishment awaiting the unbelieving Jews, and all the obstinately wicked: “For, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

Luke now proceeds with the history, in these words, “*And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.*” The clause should certainly be rendered, “two others, or other persons, malefactors, and not as in some copies of our Bible, “two other malefactors;” for, the latter rendering suggests the idea that Christ was a malefactor too. These malefactors are called by Matthew and Mark, “thieves,” or, as the word more exactly signifies, robbers.\* It appears, from Josephus, that in those times, Judea was very much infested by banditti of this description, who associated in numerous parties, and were guilty of robbery, murder, and every atrocity. Some idea of these formidable outlaws may be gathered from the following brief quotations from the Jewish historian: “Ezekias, the chief of the robbers, was subdued by Herod.”—

\* *Αντρες.*

"One Simon, straggling about with the robbers with whom he associated, burnt the palaces in Jericho."—"Felix, having caught the chief robber, Eleazar, who had wasted the country with fire and sword for twenty years, sent him to Rome, and many others with him."—"Another kind of robbers arose in Jerusalem, called Sicarii (assassins, cut-throats), who slew men in the day-time, and in the midst of the city." By thus leading away these two notorious offenders against the laws to be put to death, along with Jesus Christ, his enemies seem to have intended to cast ignominy on him, and to make the public believe that he too was to suffer for some crime. His being confounded with such characters must have been an aggravation of his sufferings, as it has been to some of his followers, who, having been called to suffer for his sake, have complained, more than of anything else, of the wickedness and blasphemy with which they have most innocently been brought into ignominious and painful contact. And yet, it might well have comforted them to reflect on what he had to pass through before them. "My God," exclaims a French writer,\* "into what company hast thou brought that Son who lives and reigns eternally with thee, in the society and unity of the Holy Spirit! By this thou art pleased to comfort those who, being oppressed by the calumnies and injustice of men, are confined to the company of malefactors, in a dungeon, in the galleys, and, perhaps, on a scaffold. Cause them, O my God, by the perception of a lively faith, to be sensible of the consolation arising from the conformity of their state with that of thy beloved Son."

Verse 33: "*And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary.*" Matthew says, "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull." Mark's words are nearly the same as Matthew's; and John says the place was called "The place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha;"† that is, the place was called in Hebrew, or the Chaldæo-Syriac, the dialect then used by the Jews, Golgotha; in Greek, Cranion; in Latin, Calvaria, Calvary; which words are all of the same meaning, and signify, in English, the place of a skull, or skulls. It appears to have been the usual place of executing criminals who were condemned in Jerusalem.‡ It was a small hill near that city; and its top would be a

\* Quesnel.

† Matt. xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22; John xix. 17.

‡ Like the "Gemoniæ Scalæ," near Rome.

fit place for such examples as were intended to be seen by multitudes. It is generally thought to have derived its name from the number of persons put to death on it, whose skulls, and other bones, if they did not lie on the surface, would appear when the ground was dug. Some, however, say that it had its name from some resemblance its shape was supposed to bear to that of a human head, or skull. Abhorred as Mount Calvary was, and dark as are the superstitions ingrafted on almost everything connected with the scene of Christ's history, that mount has acquired an interest beyond what attaches to any other spot on earth; for there the Son of God died for our sins, and finished the work of our redemption. That some have gone to an extravagant length, is no reason why those feelings which naturally arise in interesting localities should be stifled. It is easy to suppose that the sensations of men who are scripturally enlightened must be very peculiar, and intensely moving, when, sojourning in the land of Palestine, their feet stand on this celebrated spot. But let us not at all imagine that its sight is at all necessary to our faith, or would certainly make any saving impression on our minds; for in vain, as to such an end, have many visited it; nay, the sight of Messiah's crucifixion itself left many unmoved and hardened. It is the great event that took place on Calvary, in its moral bearings; it is the looking by faith to Him who died there; it is the knowledge and reception of the atonement that was there made, that can benefit us. For the receiving of that doctrine, there is no need for us to take a journey to the Holy Land, that we may tread the streets of Jerusalem, and go out to Golgotha. Salvation is as near to us here as it would be there. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead); but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." We are now considering an exact account of all that then happened on Calvary which it would be of any use for us to know, an account which has been recorded, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for our learning, on whom the

ends of the world are come: let us give diligent heed to that account, that it may make that deep and salutary impression on our minds which it is so well fitted to produce.

It was the custom of the Jews to give to the criminal who was about to be put to death, a potion of wine mixed with spices, and other ingredients, especially frankincense, for the purpose of deadening his feelings, and rendering him insensible to pain, by its intoxicating and narcotic influence. In defence of this, they referred to Prov. xxxi. 6, "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts." But, however proper it may be in any such case, to administer, in great moderation, what may be necessary to strengthen, it is obviously very improper to do so to the degree which would produce stupefaction. Now, this is the proper place to notice the offer, or rather offers, of drink made to Christ, when he had arrived at Calvary, and just before they proceeded to crucify him. Matthew says, "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink;" that is, he would not do more than taste. Mark says, "They gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but he received it not;"\* that is, he would not even taste it. Some consider these as two different descriptions of the same drink, vinegar being a weak, sour wine, and the word gall being put, not only for the gall of animals, strictly so called, or bile, but for anything very bitter, such as myrrh, or wormwood. It is more common, however, and it appears more natural, to consider these as two different potions. Those who were most active against our Lord, in cruel and derisive imitation of the custom referred to, presented to him the very nauseous mixture of vinegar and gall. This may be viewed as an expressive emblem of the bitter grief, the heavy sufferings, which he was enduring. Jeremiah represents the Jews as thus describing their calamities: "The Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink." In this, as in many other circumstances, his enemies, while they only meant to mock him, strengthened the proof of his Messiahship, by fulfilling the prophecy in Ps. lxix. 21: "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." After all, this was but a feeble emblem of the sorrow he endured. Let us think, with adoring wonder

\* Matt. xxvii 34; Mark xv. 23.

and lively gratitude, how he tasted this sour and bitter cup, that he might infuse the sweet ingredient of spiritual consolation into the cup of our sorrows, and put into our hands the cup of salvation.

As distinguished from the vinegar and gall, the mixture of wine and myrrh was, probably, good wine, tempered in the way that was judged proper on such occasions, and kindly provided by Christ's friends. This, however, he did not receive, he did not even taste. Thus, no ground was given for malice to insinuate that he was not animated by calm resolution, but stimulated to false courage, and rendered insensible to the terrors of death, by the effect of that mixture. In addition to what has been already said, we may farther observe, that while it is lawful and proper to take such cordials, or medicines, as are needful to prevent fainting, and to procure some sleep in the time of painful and dangerous disease, it must be sinful to take what would stupify the senses, and incapacitate for improving what may be the very last hours of earthly existence. Great care, for example, should be taken in the use of opium, and every kind of strong drink. They offered Jesus these potions, then, while he was standing on Calvary.

Luke adds, "*There they crucified him.*" But how shall we bring ourselves to contemplate this appalling scene? We have accompanied this most blessed person through all the stages of his history, from his birth to the present moment; we have been amazed at his power, and we have wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and, were natural feeling alone to be consulted, we should, probably, be disposed to say, "Alas! and is this to be the closing scene of such a life, and this the treatment of such a benefactor of man? Will they venture on such a deed? Will they dare to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed? If their courage fail not, and if a regard to justice do not move them, surely pity will restrain them. Yet, if it is to be, we cannot witness it. Hitherto we have accompanied him, but we can do so no farther? Here we must leave him." More enlarged views, however, will teach us otherwise; for, however dismal it was, in itself, many of the immediate concomitants of his death were most animating and instructive, and its ultimate results transcend, in blessed interest and importance, those of any other event whatever. At the same time, when this scene is realized, it is overpowering to the feelings of many.

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A proper medium should, therefore, be observed. To pass over this subject slightly would be wrong, and akin to that morbid sensibility, or that affectation of fine feeling, which makes some people unable, or makes them imagine they are unable, to assist or approach their friends when they are in distress, or to hear of them after they are dead; and which, under the cloak of apparent keenness of feeling and affection, is nothing but weakness or selfishness; and yet, to enlarge very much on this scene would be needlessly distressing. Let as much be said, then, and only as much, as is necessary to render the subject intelligible. Indeed, all that met the eye in this case, terrible as it was, was little, compared with what the Redeemer endured in inward anguish from a cause of which no eye could see the operation.

The actual executioners of this horrible sentence were four of the Roman soldiers, encouraged by some of our Lord's Jewish persecutors. There may have been a more numerous band near, but, that a "quaternion," or party of four, and no more, had to carry the sentence into execution, is certain from the circumstance, afterwards to be noticed, of his garments, when divided into four parts, furnishing a part for each. We are to believe that this case was managed, in most respects, like other cases of the same kind. The cross was laid on the ground, and consisted of two beams, one large beam and a transverse beam, fitted and fastened to each other. The soldiers stripped the blessed Sufferer of his raiment. The shame of nakedness came by sin, and he who was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, bore this shame; he was thus stripped, that we might be clothed in white raiment, and the shame of our spiritual nakedness no more appear. Making him lie down on his back on the cross, and extend his arms, they nailed his hands to the respective parts of the transverse beam, and fastened his feet to the principal beam, either by one nail driven through both of them, or by a nail driven through each of them. They then lifted up the cross with him upon it, and fixed it upright in the earth. In being crucified, persons were sometimes tied to the cross; but they were most commonly nailed to it. That Jesus was nailed to the cross appears from the fulfilled prophecy in Ps. xxii. 16: "They pierced my hands and my feet;" and from what we read in the 20th chapter of John, of his showing the disciples his hands, and of Thomas saying, "Except I shall

see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails," "I will not believe;" in consequence of which our Lord afterwards said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands."

As it was foretold, in the psalm just quoted, that he was to suffer in some way that required his hands and feet to be pierced, that is, by crucifixion, so Christ himself repeatedly predicted, not only his death, but the manner of it. "The Son of man," said he, "shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge, and to crucify him."—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."

Crucifixion was, in many respects, a dreadful death. That it was very *painful* is obvious. The piercing and tearing of the hands and feet, those tender parts, and the weight of the body resting on the spikes driven through them, must have occasioned the most intense suffering. So intense was it, that the Romans used a word derived from their word for a cross, to denote torment in general—hence our word "excruciating." It was a most *disgraceful* punishment. It seems to have been unknown to the Jews till it was introduced among them by the Romans, among whom it was inflicted only on slaves who had been guilty of heinous crimes.\* It was a *lingering* death, those who were crucified being generally left to hang till they died of loss of blood, torture, and exhaustion. It is said that some have hung on the cross alive for two or three days. Our Lord suffered in this dreadful way for about six hours. Mark (xv. 25, 34) says that "it was the third hour when they crucified him," that is, nailed him to the cross, and that "at the ninth hour" he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" A difficulty, it is true, arises from its being said by John (xix. 14) that it was "about the sixth hour" when Pilate brought forth Jesus, and said to the Jews, "Behold your king." Various ideas are entertained as to the true way of reconciling these two accounts, some holding that John reckons according to our way of naming the hours, and that about three hours elapsed between the events mentioned, which is not at all probable; others

\* Hor. Sat. L. I. Sat. iii. 80; and Epis. Lib. I. xvi. 48.

thinking that an error in the number has crept in, in transcribing John, which ought never to be presumed without absolute necessity; others considering the evangelists as expressing themselves in a very general way; and others, that everything is cleared up by taking into account the two different ways of dividing the day by hours and by watches.\* Mark's account is, certainly, the more full of the two, and gives a key to the interpretation more decidedly than the other. Counting from six in the morning, the Jews, in dividing the day into twelve hours, called our seven in the morning the first hour; of course, our nine in the morning was their third hour, and our three in the afternoon their ninth hour. Thus, as already said, Jesus was about six hours alive on the cross; which (though many crucified persons lived longer) was a dreadfully prolonged torture, speaking merely, at present, of his bodily sufferings. And, once more, the death of the cross was an *accursed* death. It was pronounced to be so by the words of inspiration: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."† This declaration is to be accounted for in the following way. Having violated the law of God, we are under its curse, and exposed to divine wrath: "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But Christ, in becoming our surety and substitute, "was made sin for us," had our sin imputed to him, so that he, though perfectly holy and blessed in himself, was accursed in the eye of the law, and had to suffer the wrath of God for us. Now, God having purposed, in his infinite wisdom, justice, and grace, to deliver us by means of the death of his Son suspended on the cross, as an emblem of this, he declared the person who should undergo the punishment of hanging, in any way, to be accursed, when he said, by his servant Moses, in Deut. xxi. 23, "He that is hanged is accursed of God." But we shall not enlarge on this point here, as we intend to reserve the doctrine of the vicarious nature of our Lord's sufferings, as well as the general practical inferences to be drawn from

\* On this intricate point the notes of Doddridge, Campbell, &c., may be consulted; also Mill's Annotations, and Wolfii Cursus Phil. vol. i. 969.

† Gal. iii. 13.



his crucifixion, till we read of his expiring, except in so far as expressions occurring in the course of the history may seem to require a different procedure. Such, then, was the punishment of crucifixion; and was it not a most dreadful death? It was common among the Romans, and some other ancient nations; but, being so honoured in the case of the Son of God, and the work of man's redemption, it was very properly discontinued wherever Christianity prevailed; and Constantine, the first Christian emperor, made a decree positively prohibiting its being employed in any case.

They crucified Jesus, says Luke, "*and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*" It is believed that two of his disciples, Peter and Andrew, were afterwards crucified for Christ's sake, but none of them suffered along with him. Thus, no room was afforded for superstition to ascribe any of the merit of redemption to any of his apostles; and it were the highest pitch of folly to ascribe any merit to these malefactors. He alone bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Ignominy was intentionally cast on him, by putting him to death along with such offenders; and his enemies assigned to him the most conspicuous place, the middle, as if he had been a greater criminal than the two robbers. Now were fulfilled the words of the evangelical prophet, "He made his grave with the wicked;" and "He was numbered with the transgressors," or criminals.\* He made his grave with the wicked, that we might rest in peace. He was numbered with the malefactors, that we might be numbered with the people of God.

"*Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" This is one of the seven sayings which our Lord uttered on the cross, three of which are given by Luke. It appears to have been the first in order of time, and to have been spoken, either while they were nailing him to the cross, or immediately after they had done so. It is a prayer; and, certainly, one of the most remarkable prayers ever offered up. Jesus, while he was suffering for sin, still addressed God as his Father; for, in respect of his absolute divinity, that endearing relation could never cease to exist. The prayer was presented for others, nay, for his ungodly enemies, for whom he was more concerned than for himself. Now, according to another prophecy in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, at the close of the chapter, "He made inter-

\* Isa. liii. 9, 12.

cession for the transgressors." And, what more astonishing can be said? this was a prayer for his very murderers! It is to be remembered that the prayers of Christ are not vague and powerless wishes, but definite and effectual supplications. "I pray for them," said he; "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine."—"I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always." This particular prayer, then, must have been heard, in the way, and to the extent he intended it. Some are inclined to think that this prayer referred, first of all, to the soldiers who were the actual perpetrators of his murder, and that they were, consequently, afterwards converted and saved. This prayer must certainly have referred to the Jews who were concerned in the crime; that is, to such of them as were within "the election of grace." The means of salvation were amply afforded to them, in compliance with his command, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" and we know that many of them were converted to the faith of Christ through the merit of that precious blood which they wickedly shed.

And then, how remarkable the argument with which the Saviour enforces this prayer—"For they know not what they do!" The soldiers in particular were, probably, in a great measure unacquainted with the character and claims of the illustrious prisoner; and, in that case, their guilt in executing the order given them was comparatively small, except in so far as they used mockery and unnecessary cruelty. Many of these Jews also, from the prejudices of education, and the expectation of a conquering Messiah, contrasted with the lowly appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, knew not that he was indeed the Christ, and had little idea of the enormity of what they were doing. "Ye men of Israel," said Peter, "ye killed the Prince of life."—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."\* The apostle Paul, too, in writing to the Corinthians † concerning the wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel, says, "Which none of the princes of this world knew; for, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." This was certainly some extenuation of their guilt; and our Lord availed himself of it, and pleaded it as such. Yet this by no means justified

\* Acts iii. 17.

† 1 Cor. ii. 8.

them; nay, his murder was a most heinous crime. It was a deed that required forgiveness, as this prayer plainly implied. Accordingly, forgiveness was extended to those who turned to the Lord in faith and repentance; and wrath to the uttermost overwhelmed all the rest. There is another view, however, which may be taken of this clause, namely, that according to which it is to be considered, not so much as an extenuation, as a particular way of expressing the heinousness of the crime. Thus, we sometimes say of thoughtless sinners, "They know not," or, "They little know the danger they are incurring, and the blessings they are despising," when we intend, not so much to advance an excuse for their ignorance, as to intimate the greatness of the danger and the blessings. So, it is probable, this prayer is to be understood, though both ideas seem to be included.

But this astonishing prayer is still full of instruction to us. It calls on us to consider, with becoming caution, how *ignorance extenuates guilt*. And here it is to be observed, that there are some who have enjoyed excellent means of instruction, and yet fail to improve them so as to receive the truth; who are well informed, and yet very wicked; who reject the Saviour in the very midst of light; and who knowingly and obstinately sin against their own convictions. The guilt of such is peculiarly great, and their destruction almost certain. In the words of the apostle to the Hebrews, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." At the same time, it is also to be observed that there are many more who reject Christ from ignorance. It was so at first, and it is so still. They have not been instructed in their own sinfulness, nor in the character and work of Christ; or, if they have heard of these, and even heard often of them, their ideas of them are vague, and they have not come to understand them so as to know them to be true. If men were really aware that they were perishing, would they not seek deliverance? If they knew the mercy and the glory of the Redeemer, would they not receive him? Surely they would, in general; surely the instances of the contrary would be but few.

From these circumstances, it is natural to observe, farther, and more directly to the point, that knowledge aggravates, and ignorance extenuates, the guilt of offences which,

as to the substance of them, are the same in themselves. The better the opportunities neglected, the greater the guilt. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Jesus,\* "they had not had sin," that is, comparatively: "but now they have no cloak for their sin." "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." So, on the other hand, where there is less light, there is less guilt. "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," said Paul; "but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Those who are aware of the evil and danger of sin, and of the excellency of Christ, and still persevere in impenitence and unbelief, seem utterly hardened, and animated by a rooted hatred of what is good; whereas, ignorance leaves room for hope that knowledge, when it comes, will prevail, and is even consistent with some conscientiousness. And, as there are thus different degrees of guilt, there are, of consequence, different degrees of punishment. Our Lord said to the Jews who rejected his ministry, "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah," and, "for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you."—"That servant who knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

At the same time, we here learn that *ignorance cannot excuse what is wrong, except that ignorance be absolutely invincible*. Nay, as it was in the case of the murder of the Lord of glory, so it is in many other cases—a very high degree of guilt is compatible with much ignorance. Isaiah says, "It is a people of no understanding: therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," saith the Lord. Paul, in opposing Christ, acted ignorantly in unbelief, and even thought with himself that "he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" but, did that apostle think that he was therefore blameless, or even, that his guilt was trivial? By no means. "This is a faithful saying," said he, "and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."—"I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church

\* John xv. 22.

of God." It is of much importance that we all keep this in mind. We may have had different means of instruction, and we may have attained to different degrees of knowledge; but none of us can plead ignorance in bar of the sentence of condemnation, if we be found among unbelievers at last; for our ignorance must be our own fault. The guilt of some of the ignorant rejecters of Christ is enormous; but the guilt of none of them can be small in this land of light. All of them need forgiveness, and must perish without it. Let it never be forgotten that, according to the law of Moses, sacrifices were to be offered, not only for sins done willingly, but also for sins of ignorance.\*

Farther: What a striking and instructive view have we here of the *compassionate and forgiving spirit of the Redeemer*! How admirable this prayer in this view! Justly might he have dwelt on the heinous nature and aggravating circumstances of the crime his murderers were committing. Justly might he have called for fire to come down from heaven to consume them. But, so far from that, he placed their deed in the least unfavourable light he could, and prayed for their forgiveness. And, to do so for such enemies, and in the midst of his own agonies, surely this was a love surpassing knowledge, and worthy of God manifest in the flesh. Well may we trust in such a Saviour as this. Well may we be encouraged, by his conduct in this instance, to pray and to look to him for the forgiveness of our sins. This should teach, even the most heinous offenders, not to despair of mercy, if they will but seek it through him; for it is difficult to conceive any sin more heinous than what these murderers were guilty of. Let sinners be hence induced to go to God, through him, for pardon; and, through the merit of his blood, and the power of his intercession, they cannot fail of success. They will find that "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." What a lesson, too, does this read to us, and what an obligation does it lay on us, to forgive one another! We are too ready to aggravate any injuries we may have suffered: instead of this, we should be willing to put the least unfavourable construction on the actions of our enemies which they will bear. Let us cherish a forgiving disposition ourselves, and let us pray that God would forgive them. Stephen died praying for those that were stoning him: "Lord, lay not

\* Lev. iv.

this sin to their charge." "At my first answer," said Paul, "no man stood with me, but all forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." To those who hope that they are themselves pardoned, the exhortation ought to come with much force, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

It only remains to notice the words, "*And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*" This part of the history is thus more fully given by John: \* "Then the soldiers, when they crucified Jesus," that is, had nailed him to the cross, "took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore, the soldiers did." All his garments, except his coat or vest, they divided into four parts, which gave a share to each man in the *quaternion*, or party of four. But, as the curiously woven vest would have been spoiled by being divided, they determined by lot who should have it. Not being able to see any foundation for the mystical meaning which some have attached to this circumstance, I shall only remark, that, though the soldiers were following their own inclination, and thoughtlessly amusing themselves in the way most agreeable to themselves, God, in his providence, was overruling their conduct to strengthen the evidence of Jesus' Messiahship by the fulfilment of the prophecy in the 22d Psalm, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." We do not read of this being done in the case of David himself, nor yet of his hands and feet being pierced; and, therefore, it is probable that, though in many things there were facts in his history typically corresponding to facts in Christ's history, in this and several other passages, David had no reference to himself, but indited what was suggested by the Holy Ghost in reference solely to Messiah; and perhaps, he did not clearly understand what the Spirit of Christ which was in him thus signified. We, however, read the fulfilment of the prophecy, which makes its meaning plain. Let this confirm our faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners.

\* John xix. 23.

## LECTURE CXXVIII.

## LUKE XXIII. 35-43.

"And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others: let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar. 37. And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. 38. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** 39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41. And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

THE Roman soldiers had nailed the Son of God to the cross, and had parted his garments among them by casting lots. They had also crucified the two malefactors who were led out to be put to death at the same time with him. Matthew mentions, that "they sat down and watched him there:" this they did, no doubt, to secure Christ's actual death, by preventing any of his friends from interfering to rescue him—which precaution was the more necessary in this kind of execution, as it was so slow and lingering. Luke here says, "*And the people stood beholding: and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*"\* The people who, as we found before, had gone out in great numbers, remained long to witness the shocking spectacle, a few of them with commiseration, but the greater part with malicious satisfaction and savage joy, chiefly because his doctrine had given them uneasiness. This wicked rabble, who were looking on, in defiance of all sense of de-

\* The Chosen, or the Elect one, of God, seems to have been one of the designations by which the Messiah was known among the Jews, and borrowed, no doubt, from Isa. xlii. 1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

cency and humanity, which, in almost all cases, prompts men to pity even the most notorious criminals when they come to suffer death for their misdeeds, began to upbraid Jesus in the most cruel and insulting language; and in this they were joined by the chief priests and counsellors, whose enmity to our Lord had caused them so far to forget the dignity of their office as to accompany the mob on this awful occasion, and to behave towards him in the most shameful manner. If in saying, "He saved others," they meant to acknowledge that he wrought miracles of mercy, by that acknowledgment they condemned themselves for rejecting and crucifying him. If they meant to say that his claim to work miracles and to save men spiritually was a mere pretence, they were then guilty of cruel irony, and of impiously calling in question his divine power which had already effected such wonders, and which was yet more fully to show itself able to save in the noblest sense of the word. That he could have saved himself, that is, delivered himself, nailed to the cross, surrounded by his Jewish enemies, and guarded by a band of Roman soldiers, as he was, there can be no doubt. Of this he had given abundant proof, as on many other occasions, so the very night before, when, as soon as he said, "I am he," the crowd who had come to apprehend him, "went backward, and fell to the ground." As he said then, so might he have said now, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Prophecy required his death, and so did the accomplishment of the atonement and man's salvation. But his enemies understood not these things, and, therefore, foolishly regarded his not delivering himself as the overthrow of his pretensions, and not, as it really was, the establishment of his claim, and the actual accomplishment of the chief design of his mission. As the apostle writes to the Corinthians, "He was crucified through weakness"—he did not put forth his strength, or power, to deliver himself, but allowed himself to be put to death, as if he had been a weak and helpless mere man.

The account of the insults to which our Lord was now exposed is thus more fully given by Matthew: "And they that passed by,"—not only Christ's known and confirmed enemies who remained stationary by his cross, but also the passengers on the contiguous road, catching their



malicious spirit, "reviled him, wagging their heads," in derision and scorn, "and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days" (a complete misquotation of his words, and perversion of his meaning), "save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God" (how base to upbraid him with his confidence in his heavenly Father, as if it had been vain!); "let him deliver him now, if he will have him" (if he desire him, or regard him with delight); "for he said, I am the Son of God." They challenge the great God himself to deliver him. "The thieves also, who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." "To complete this unparalleled scene, even the thieves could find a heart, in the midst of their own agonies, and the horrid prospect which lay before them, to join the general voice, and to upbraid the crucified Jesus. Though they suffered for notorious crimes, they escaped this obloquy and insult, and were regarded as objects of compassion; yet even they could look on Jesus with disdain and derision. We may challenge universal history to furnish another instance, in which any person, expiring under the tortures of a cruel execution, was treated with such derision, contempt, and mockery, by all ranks and orders of men, and even by one at least of his fellow-sufferers. This was reserved for the holy Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, God manifest in the flesh; and this transaction is a full demonstration of apostate man's rancorous enmity to the holy image, truth, and law of his Creator; and a sufficient confutation of all the flattering representations of proud moralists and philosophers, who know more of everything than of God and of themselves. Indeed, prophets and martyrs, who were renewed to some measure of the same image, and stood up for the same truths, always met with an adequate proportion of the same treatment; but it has been confined to them, and malefactors have almost universally been exempted from it."\* Those whom the truth does not amend, it naturally displeases; and the transition is short to a dislike of those who proclaim it and act according to it, and to a malevolent triumph

\* Scott.

over their sufferings and their fall. We are told, that on the murder of the two witnesses, "they shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves: and they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth."\*

These unbelieving Jews, nay, the very chief priests, scribes, and elders, seem not to have been aware that, in what they now said, with the intention of pouring contempt on Jesus of Nazareth as an impostor, they were employing the very words which David, a thousand years before, had foretold should be spoken against the true Messiah. It is most worthy of our notice, that the very expressions, nay, the very attitude, of insult, of which we have just heard, are exactly predicted in the 22d Psalm, from the 7th verse: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Though these cruel and infatuated men said they would believe in Christ if he came down from the cross, there is no reason to suppose that they would have done so. They had already resisted so many miracles, that there is every ground to believe they would have resisted this. If he had come down from the cross, they might have said that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that the soldiers had not fastened him firmly to it, or that he had disentangled himself by a great exertion. To come up from the grave after he was dead was, certainly, much more wonderful than it would have been to have come down from the cross while he was alive. He did rise from the dead; and yet the great majority of his enemies continued in unbelief. Their present pretence, therefore, was only an insulting way of declaring that he could not save himself. Let us beware of resembling these wicked men, in any degree, in mocking Christ, or his people, or his cause. There are mockers in these last days, who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and who vent many other infidel and profane sentiments. But let us not be mockers, lest our bands be made strong. Let us also beware of rejecting Christ on the pretence of the want of sufficient evidence of his divine mission. It is of the wicked one that some still represent the truth of the gospel as matter of doubt. "If thou be the Son of God," said Satan

\* Rev. xi. 9.

to our Lord, "command that these stones be made bread"—"cast thyself down." "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." It is not for us to dictate what kind of evidence we will receive: evidence is actually furnished, more varied and more powerful than we could have imagined; and it is for us to be satisfied with it. The danger of resting the reception of the gospel on arbitrary grounds, and thus of being fatally perverted, and confirmed in infidelity, should deter all from prescribing conditions of their own. Jesus has proved himself to be the Son of God in many ways, and, especially, by his death and resurrection: and if we do not perceive the force of this evidence, it must be because we are blinded by prejudice and the love of sin. "If we believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead" before our own eyes—neither would we be convinced by any evidence whatever.

*"And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself."* Urged on by the example of the Jews, and willing to gratify them, the Roman soldiers forgot their usual manliness, and joined in deriding the meek sufferer. And whereas the Jews rested chiefly on his claim of being the Messiah, the soldiers dwelt on his claim of being the king of the Jews, as what was more directly opposed to the Roman government. With regard to this offer of vinegar; we have already noticed the offers of wine mingled with myrrh, and vinegar mingled with gall: and unless some such drink was offered four times, this offer must correspond with that which we shall afterwards find more particularly mentioned by John.

Let us admire and imitate the meekness and patience with which our Lord bore all these indignities. If we are at any time exposed to contumelious language, let us "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds."

*"And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the king of the Jews."* It was usual with the Romans to let the public know the crime for which condemned persons were to suffer, by affixing an inscription to the top of the cross, and, sometimes, by carrying the inscription before them, as they were led out. An ancient author mentions a particular instance of a slave crucified by his master, "with a writing

showing the crime for which he was put to death.\* The words were written on a white board which was nailed to the cross above the head of the sufferer.† It is said that the same custom still prevails in China, where the punishment of crucifixion is sometimes inflicted. The inscription on the cross of Christ, as given fully by John, was "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." Jesus was a common name; this Jesus was called Jesus of Nazareth, because he resided there before he went to live in Capernaum. The charge against him that he gave himself out as the king of the Jews, was false in the sense it was intended to bear, though true in a far nobler sense. He never assumed the title in any sense which could fairly excite the jealousy of the Roman government. Pilate himself was satisfied with the explanation he gave, when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He was the king of the Jews, of right, though they rejected him as a nation. He was the king, in fact, of such of the Jews as acknowledged him as Messiah. He is the king of all who have been converted to the gospel. "He hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords"—"There is given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Whoever may reject him, be it ours to submit to him, and to rejoice in him as our King.

This inscription was written in Greek, which was the language most generally known at that time, and which, in this case, would be peculiarly intended for the Hellenistic Jews, or Jews who used the Greek language—in Latin, out of regard to the Roman government—and in Hebrew, or the dialect of Hebrew, which was the vulgar tongue of Judea. In illustration of this, we may notice the two following facts. Josephus‡ mentions that there was a partition in a certain part of the temple of Jerusalem, on which was an inscription in Greek and Hebrew, to the effect that no Gentile should advance farther into the temple, on pain of death. It is related that the Roman soldiers erected a

\* *Μετὰ γραμμάτων τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς θανάτου αὐτοῦ δηλοῦντων.*—*Diō,* L. liv. 3. See other examples in Lipsius de Cruce, L. ii.

† See Pearson on the Creed.

‡ *Antiq. xv. 11; Wars, VI. ii.*

monument in Persia, to Gordian, with an inscription in Latin, Persian, Jewish, and Egyptian characters.\* The three languages employed in the case before us were just those which were best adapted to make it universally known: so that, instead of this furnishing any argument that the Scriptures should be confined to these three languages, as some have most preposterously affirmed, it is, in as far as it can be considered applicable, a proof that every exertion should be made to enable all nations to read in their own tongue the history of Jesus Christ, and all the wonderful works of God.

The evangelist John states, that it was Pilate who wrote this title, and put it on the cross; that is, Pilate was the author of it, and ordered it to be fixed up. John adds, "Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The king of the Jews; but that he said, I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written." As it stood, the inscription seemed to be a reflection on the Jews as having procured the crucifixion of their Messiah; they, therefore, were offended by it, and wished it altered. Pilate, however, justly offended by their importunity, which had, prevailed on him to condemn Jesus contrary to his own conviction of justice, would not gratify them in this, but ordered the inscription to remain as he had composed it at first. In fact, what was intended as an accusation and a reproach, was our Lord's defence, and a proclamation of his kingly dignity. So Balaam, who was hired to curse the Israelites, blessed them altogether; and Caiaphas, the unbelieving high priest, was divinely overruled to utter a prediction that Christ should die for sinners of all nations.

Verse 39: "*And one of the malefactors who were hanged, reviled on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*" We have already quoted Matthew, as saying, "The thieves also, who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth;" and the words of Mark (xv. 32) are, "They that were crucified with him reviled him." In order to reconcile this apparent inconsistency, some hold that Luke's account only is to be considered as strictly and literally true, only one of the malefactors having, at any time, reviled Christ after he was nailed to the cross; and that the other two evangelists, though they speak of the thieves, use the figure of speech called *enallage*, or a change of number, putting

\* Julius Capitolinus. See Elmer on John xix. 20.

the plural for the singular. They remark that a thing is often said to be done by a number of persons, which is done only by some of them, or even by one of them.\* Others suppose both the accounts equally literal and correct, but referring to different times. They think that both the malefactors reviled Christ at first, but that one of them, being converted after his suspension on the cross, ceased to revile Christ, while the other continued to revile him to the last. They observe that the convert may, probably, have had some knowledge of Christ's claims and character before; but that it was not till after he was fixed to the cross that he was converted, the special influence of divine grace working powerfully on his soul along with the views then given of the death of the holy Jesus as a sacrifice for sin, his general conduct on the occasion, and the miraculous darkness. Many things, however, may be conjectured, which cannot be proved, and which, therefore, ought not to be affirmed. It will be of less importance than some think, which of these two opinions we adopt, provided we do not explain away the facts which are positively stated. It is quite certain that a man is here spoken of as converted and saved, who had been a notorious malefactor, and who was justly condemned to death for his crimes: now, what more than this is necessary to constitute a striking display of the power of Christ to save, and of the freeness of his grace? With opinions which seem to be embraced and advocated from a desire to weaken the real strength of this case, from a dislike to very decided, and, it may be, quickly made impressions, and from groundless fears of turning the grace of God into licentiousness, we ought to feel no sympathy.

Dreadfully aggravated, indeed, was the conduct of that malefactor, who, to the guilt of all his other sins, especially of his crimes that brought him to the cross, added that of not only beginning, but continuing, in the midst of sufferings, in which he should have been deeply concerned for his own eternal safety, and earnestly praying for mercy to his soul, to upbraid the Son of God, and to declare him an impostor, if he did not save him from temporal death. Here we see, at once, the amazing depravity of the human heart, and the absolute insufficiency of the mere sufferings and terrors of death to effect a saving change on it. How awful to think of this wretched man who had lived in crime, not

\* For example, see Gen. viii. 4, and xix. 29; also Matt. xxvi. 8, compared with Mark xiv. 4, 5; John xii. 4.

only dying in torture, but dying blaspheming the Saviour—dying to die the second death—dying to die for ever! From such an end, nay, from everything in the least resembling such an end, may the God of mercy deliver us!

But let us proceed to the more pleasing work of tracing the evidences of the conversion of the other criminal. The first evidence is the proper spirit he manifested towards his impenitent companion: "*But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?*" "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and the want of that fear is the root of all evil. The way in which the impenitent man spoke proved him to be totally destitute of such a fear—to be utterly ungodly. The admonition was very suitable: for, surely, the fear of God should have then predominated in his mind above every other fear. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," said our Lord: "but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." The consideration that he was condemned to and suffering the same death with Jesus, should have led this malefactor to behave towards him in a very different manner; and it would have done so, if he had had any religious principle at all. For one dying man to scoff at another, especially at such a fellow-sufferer as Jesus Christ, was unspeakably wicked. Now, it is a commanded duty faithfully and affectionately to admonish an offending companion: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."\*—"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The very faithful and affectionate spirit which this man displayed towards his fellow-sufferer, his concern for the salvation of his companion, who feared not God, was a proof that he now feared God himself.

The second evidence of his conversion is his confession that he was suffering deservedly: "Thou art in the same condemnation; *and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.*" This was a full and candid confession of his guilt, and of the justice of his condemnation. Such a confession is necessary on the part of every condemned criminal, as he cannot be truly penitent unless he thus disburden his conscience, honour the laws, and give

\* Lev. xix. 17.

glory to God by acknowledging his guilt and the justice of his sentence. So it is with every man who, though he may not have violated the laws of his country, is a transgressor of the law of God: if he be penitent, he confesses his sins to the Lord, and acknowledges that he might justly be punished for them eternally. And, if God has subjected him to any affliction, it deepens his contrition, and is submitted to by him with a subdued spirit. He "accepts the punishment of his iniquity," and acknowledges that God has punished him less than his iniquities deserve." Such sincere penitential confession of sin, though neither the meritorious cause, nor the means, of pardon, is inseparably connected with it. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."—"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The third evidence of this malefactor's conversion is the testimony he bore to the innocence of Christ: "*But this man hath done nothing amiss.*" This testimony is very strong. It signifies, not merely, that Jesus had not been guilty of any ordinary crime which could justify his condemnation, but that he had done nothing in any degree out of place,\* improper, or unbecoming. Now, aware as this malefactor evidently was of Jesus' claiming the character of Messiah, this testimony amounted to a declaration of the truth of that claim; for, surely to have put forth such a claim falsely would have been very much amiss, would have been a heinous sin. This was a testimony at once to his Messiahship, and to his perfect innocence. In like manner, every real Christian must have a proper view of the perfect innocency of the Redeemer, and must regard him as the Holy One and the Just, who did nothing amiss. This idea is necessary to every right conception of him as a Saviour; for he could not have saved others if he had been a sinner himself. It is closely connected, too, with the view of the atonement. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The fourth evidence of this malefactor's conversion is his prayer: "*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*" His prayer was addressed to Christ, and is one of the many proofs that the Son of God is a proper object of divine worship. It was a prayer

\* *Amos.*



of some light, manifesting such a knowledge of Christ's official dignity as was necessary to salvation. It was a prayer that proved him to be influenced by divine grace; for, "no man can say," in light and in faith, "that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It was a prayer for spiritual, not for temporal good—for the salvation of his soul, not for deliverance from the cross: and it is always a favourable symptom of men's religious state when they are more anxious about their souls than their bodies. It was a prayer of much humility. He did not ask (as the mother of Zebedee's children did for her two sons) that Christ would grant him to sit on his right hand, or on his left, in his kingdom; but only that he would "remember" him—not forget him, but think graciously of him, and mercifully receive him. And this was a prayer of much faith. It was not the mere cry of nature in distress: it was the believing petition of a gracious soul. It implied that Christ was able to save him, that his favourable remembrance would be enough to secure his happiness, and that, though Christ was to die, he would live and reign gloriously. Thus to believe, and thus to profess his belief, in such circumstances, when the Saviour was deserted and reviled, and hanging on the cross as a criminal, manifested a strength of faith which has been seldom, if ever, exceeded.

You see, then, the varied evidence this malefactor gave of his conversion. He did all that seemed possible: the root of all that was good was manifestly in him; and, though he did not live to give long-continued proof of the genuineness of his faith, the Saviour was more honoured by the few last hours of his life than he has been by several years of the life of some true Christians.

We have, next, to consider our Lord's answer to the penitent's prayer: "*And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" "Verily," truly—so said "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness;" and his words would be made good. He promised, and gave, liberally and without upbraiding. The penitent asked to be remembered, and Jesus promised him paradise. The word, paradise, is generally considered to have been originally either a Persic or Arabic word; and thence it was transferred into other languages. The word signifies a garden; and, by way of eminence, a very delightful garden. Xenophon represents Socrates as saying, of the king of Persia, that wherever he lives, and whithersoever

he repairs, he is at great pains that there shall be ‘gardens, called paradises, full of all beautiful and good things which the earth can produce.’\* The same author says, “The Greeks (when in Persia) pitched their camp near a garden,” or paradise, “beautiful and large, and thick with all kinds of trees.”† This being the meaning of the word, it came to be used to signify the garden of Eden. The word is used thrice in the New Testament, and always in the sense of heaven, or, the place of perfect and eternal holiness and happiness. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 12th chapter, Paul says that he was “caught up into paradise;” and speaks of that as the same with being caught up “to the third,” or highest, “heaven.” In the epistle to the Church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 7, we read: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” That this is a promise of the happiness of what we usually understand by heaven is plain from the language in which the same promise, in substance, is made to the other Churches. For example, “I will give thee a crown of life.”—“I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”—“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” The very same, beyond all reasonable doubt, is the meaning of the word in the passage before us. Whatever notions may have been advanced concerning a state of existence for separate spirits which is neither heaven nor hell, all these notions are fanciful and hurtful superstitions, for which there is no foundation in the Word of God.

In this answer, our Lord speaks as having paradise, heaven itself, to bestow, and promises to bestow it on this penitent malefactor. Paradise was lost by the first Adam; it was regained by the second: nay, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, restores his followers to a nobler and happier state than that from which our first parents fell. Thou shalt be in paradise, said he, “*with me.*” This ought

\* ‘Ὅπως κῆποι τι ἰσόνται, οἱ παραδισοὶ καλουμῖνοι, παντῶν καλῶν τι καὶ ἀγαθῶν μιστοὶ ὅποσα ἡ γῆ φυνὶν ἰδίῃ.—*Xen. Eccon.*

† ‘Ἐγγυς παραδισοὶ καλοὺ καὶ μεγάλου, καὶ δασίος παντοίων δινδρῶν.—*Xen. de Exped. Cyri*, lib. ii. The word *παραδισοῦ* is used in the Septuagint, Gen. ii. 8.—Hence the ancient heathens seem to have borrowed their ideas of the gardens of the Hesperides, the trees of which were fabled to have borne golden fruit.

to dissipate, at once, all the foolish fancies concerning Christ's going into the place of punishment, between his death and resurrection: he was in paradise, or the third heaven. This also intimates that the happiness of heaven consists, in a good measure, in being with Christ. "Where I am," said he, "there ye shall be also." "I have a desire to depart," said Paul, "and to be with Christ; which is far better." This is stated as a source of consolation—"Them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him:" "Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

A strong emphasis is here to be laid on the word, "*To-day*," which is to be immediately connected, not with what goes before, as some pretend, but with what follows; our Lord thereby signifying that this converted man was to be with him in heaven, the very day on which he died. This is the natural interpretation of the passage. Besides, whatever superstitions were held by some Jews, and also by some Christians (and very strange notions were very early held by several, as has often been shown), this was the only meaning which our Lord's words could suggest to the malefactor, who, of course, was a Jew, and to the first converts to Christianity, who were almost all Jews. That the common opinion of the Jews was that the souls of the pious were immediately received into the place of happiness, which they considered as opposed to hell, appears from such quotations from Jewish writers as the following. It was a common saying, concerning a good man dying, "*To-day* he shall sit in the bosom of Abraham." Philo, the Jew, says, "Paradise is a representation of a soul leaping for fulness and greatness of joy." Again, "Abraham, when he died, went to paradise; Moses, when he died, went to paradise." And elsewhere, the same idea is thus expressed, "Abraham, and Moses, and all righteous ones, when they die, are laid up under the very throne of God."\* There can be no room, then, to doubt, how our Lord's words would be understood by Jews, and no room to doubt how they should be understood by us. What a gracious answer was this! and how must it have supported the soul of the penitent malefactor in his dying agonies!

Though the closing scene of the history of this man was so extraordinary that it cannot, in several respects, be con-

\* Lightfoot's Sermon, and Whitby; see them for authorities.

sidered a precedent, it is, nevertheless, in many respects, full of instruction to us, and universally applicable in its general principles. Let us, therefore, before leaving it, notice some points, by way of improvement.

1. We have here *a most illustrious and captivating display of the glory and grace of the Redeemer*. Here we see him, when he was ready to die himself, conferring spiritual and eternal life on a dying man—salvation on a miserable sinner. What a display of his power and grace! and how should this call forth our love and admiration, and animate us to praise his name! “O who would not love thee, thou King of mercies, though King of sorrows, that forgettest thine own tortures, to remember a poor petitioner; and mindest not the racking of thine own cross, to take care of another soul’s deliverance! And who could be ashamed, nay, who would not triumph in a crucified Jesus, that evidenceth such salvation in his very crucifying?—that, in the deepest of his shame, and in the highest of his pain, and greatest of his weakness, shows such pity, such strength, such deliverance, towards a poor wretch when there is but a span betwixt him and destruction.”\* “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered.” Herein Jesus signally “spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, and triumphed over them” in his cross.

2. We have here an instructive *example of the efficacy of prayer*. The penitent malefactor prayed to the Lord Jesus fervently, humbly, and believingly; and he was heard far beyond what he expressed. Let this teach us to pray in like manner; and Jesus will do for us also “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think.” Let it encourage us all to pray, whatever be our condition. If we have not yet obtained pardon, let us apply to Christ for it. Peter said to Simon, the sorcerer, “Repent therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” If we have obtained acceptance, we still need to pray daily that God would forgive us our debts, for, we are daily offending against him. The particular prayer offered up by this penitent criminal will be very suitable to us. In one

\* Lightfoot’s Sermon.

sense, it is true, Jesus is already come to his kingdom; he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to bestow repentance and remission of sins; but that is an additional encouragement to apply to him. Besides, we are still to regard him as to come into his kingdom at the day of judgment, and to come to us at the hour of our dissolution. Let us pray that he would remember us in life, so that we may never forget him—that he would remember us in death, to comfort us, to carry us safe through, and to receive us to himself in paradise—and that he would remember us in the great day, to give us a glorious resurrection, and an honourable acquittal before an assembled universe. There is something at once delightfully general, and delightfully applicable to every conceivable case that can occur in the history of a believer, in the petition, “Lord, remember me.” Let every one of us take it up. “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.”—“According to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord.”—“O that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me.”

3. *This case cannot be considered as an encouragement to delay.* Some may feel, in their wicked hearts, as if they would say, “If this notorious transgressor obtained mercy when he was on the brink of eternity, so may we; and, therefore, we may be quite easy in the meantime, we may safely go on in sin, and in the neglect of salvation, in the hope of being awakened and converted when our death is at hand.” But the case we have been considering is not at all parallel to that of those among us, who, enjoying the means of grace, wilfully and obstinately procrastinate. It does not appear that this malefactor had any such opportunities till the day of his death came, and, certainly, he could not have been influenced to delay by any anticipation of the advantages he enjoyed at last. Assuredly, none of you who are delaying attention to salvation can expect the same advantages with which this robber was favoured. Who of you can expect to be crucified by the side of the Son of God, or to have an opportunity of making application to him as with the bodily eye you look upon him, or to hear him say to you, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise”? Nay, who of you can be sure that you shall enjoy any ordinary opportunity, or probable means of grace, in your last hours? How do you know but that you may be cut off very suddenly, and without any time for repen-

tance? How do you know but that you may die in a delirium, which shall render attention to religion, which is a reasonable service, impossible? How do you know but that, though death may approach by very slow steps, you may not be aware of your danger—may not think yourself dying? How do you know that you may have any disposition to seek the Lord, though you may have time to do so? Or, if you shall become anxious about your souls, how do you know but that you may mistake the way of salvation, when there will be no time to correct the error? How do you know that the grace, which you have so long rejected, may not be justly withheld at the time on which you are presumptuously calculating, and that the great God may not then say, “Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and ye have not regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would none of my reproofs: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind”? In a word, how do you know but that you may either die in a state of indifference, or die in a state of despair? If you feel as if the happy issue of the one case before us would encourage you to put off, let the fearful result of the other check the wicked presumption. Remember, that, though true repentance can never be too late, many transgressors never exhibit even the semblance of repentance, and, in many cases, there is reason to fear that the appearances of late conversion are not true. Presume not, then, on this case, so as to encourage yourselves in sin, or indifference, at present. Say not with Felix, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;” but embrace the present opportunity. “To-day, if ye will hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts.”—“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” But blessed be God, there is here,

4. *An antidote to despair.* There is here the strongest encouragement to the greatest sinner in the greatest extremity to return, in the way of repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not weaken the force of this wonderful case in our foolish fears of bad consequences arising from its undisguised scriptural import. Let us by no means overlook its use, because of its abuse by some. The ignorant and unstable wrest many other parts of Scripture to their own destruction, as well as this.

Manna itself became worms and corruption when it was improperly used; yet it was "angels' food," and pleasant, and nourishing to men. We repeat that this was a most amazing instance of divine grace. There is no proof that this man had any penitence, or faith, till he was nailed to the cross; if, as is probable, he heard of Jesus before, he was at least as likely to have heard of him from his enemies, as from his friends; he was a notorious robber, justly condemned to death; and yet he repented, believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and was saved. This most striking case has often been useful to others; and I know not what we could do without it and similar preservatives against despair, in many cases where a deep conviction of sin has set in upon the conscience. If one of these malefactors perished that none might presume, the other was saved that none might despair. Indeed, who need despair, after such an example?—who that really desires deliverance, and will look to Christ for it? Let those who have at last felt the bitterness and seen the danger of their sins, and are therefore ready to apprehend that for them there is no hope, remember this case, and be assured that the Redeemer is both able and willing to enlighten the darkest mind, to renew the most depraved heart, and to wash away the deepest stains of guilt. Remembering this, let them be convinced that though they do well to abhor themselves, and to despair as to anything they themselves can do, they have no cause to despair of Christ's helping them. In conjunction with this case, let them take into view such declarations of Scripture as the following: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."—"The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even "the chief."—"He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Let them think of all this, not that they may continue in sin, but that they may be kept from despair, nay, that they may unhesitatingly throw themselves on God's compassion through the Redeemer, that they may forsake their wicked ways, and re-

turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon them, and unto our God, who will abundantly pardon.

*In the last place,* Let us be suitably affected and influenced by the nearness to which our Lord's reply brings the amazing realities of a conscious eternity: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." When the body dies, "then," at that very time, "the spirit returns unto God who gave it." It neither ceases to exist, nor sinks into a state of insensibility, nor goes into any fancied intermediate place for purification, or for safe and comfortable custody; but it returns to God, that it may be immediately consigned by him to the one or the other of the only two places of man's future existence. It passes immediately into heaven, or into hell. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." When Judas fell by transgression, he went "to his own place." Now, how very deeply should this consideration impress us! No doubt, the ideas of eternal happiness and eternal misery ought, respectively, to awaken our hopes and fears, though we were sure that thousands of years were to elapse before the commencement of the period when they are to be actually enjoyed and suffered; but, constituted as we are, there is something still more affecting in the idea that that period is as near to us as our death. Ah! it is a sad and destructive delusion to put the day of reckoning far off. And yet, how common is it for men, viewing it through that mist of uncertainty which, in one sense, shrouds it, to place it at an immeasurable distance, and hence to delay, from time to time, all due preparation for it, nay, to be as little affected by it as if it were never to arrive at all! Have you, then, my friends, properly considered and improved the inseparable connection and immediate sequence in this affair? Away from the body, and forthwith in the presence of saints and angels, or of condemned and despairing spirits! Thou thoughtless sinner, we cannot tell thee how long thou hast to live, though it cannot be very long, and may be a very short time; but we can and do tell thee, from the whole bearing of God's true Word, that dying in sin, if thou dost so die, from that moment it is all over with thee. The offer of mercy which thou so long and so inexcusably rejectedst, will be clean gone for ever; and the King of glory, whom thou despisedst, will instantly say to the servants who execute his righteous commands, "Bind him hand and foot,



and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Neither can we tell thee how long thou hast to live, thou penitent and believing child of God; but this we can and do tell thee, that, come it soon, or come it late, the moment of thy departure will be the most blessed of all moments to thee. When the wheel breaks at thy cistern of life, and its fountain ceases to play, thou shalt then commence a far nobler and happier course of being. Soon as thine eyes shut on the light of the sun, they shall open to the light of an endless day. If a tear (as has been sometimes seen in other cases) fall from thine eye as thou art about to go, it will be the last tear thou shalt ever shed. From the spot of thy dying pains thou shalt instantaneously pass to the mansion prepared for thee in thy Father's house; and the sigh with which thou breakest the fetters that bind thee to thy wasted tenement of clay, thou shalt quickly exchange for the song of victory and of heaven.

## LECTURE CXXIX.

LUKE XXIII. 44, 45.

“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”

THE occurrences which took place during the time our Lord hung on the cross are all so deeply interesting, that, though we chiefly follow Luke's history, we must feel a desire not altogether to overlook any of them, by whomsoever of the evangelists they are recorded. We shall begin, then, at present, with noticing a circumstance which, probably, happened before the darkness commenced, and which is stated by John in his 19th chapter, at the 25th verse: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” This was the third of our Lord's sayings on the cross.

The conduct of these three women, all of the same name, and of the apostle John in this instance, was truly admirable. Neither the insults and dangers to which they thus exposed themselves, nor the awfulness of the spectacle of Jesus' sufferings, prevented them from appearing openly as his friends, and remaining with him to the last, that they might show him (if they could do nothing more) their most ardent love and deepest sympathy. While the presence of all the three Marys was remarkable, that of Mary the mother of Jesus especially demands our attention. Language cannot describe what her believing and maternal heart must have felt, as she beheld the dreadful sight of the crucifixion of her Son and Saviour. Now were fulfilled the words prophetically addressed to her by Simeon, “Yea,

a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.”\* As for Jesus, he was not so engrossed with his own sufferings as to be uninterested about his mother, though she, doubtless, was thinking, not of herself, but of him. We read nothing of Joseph, Christ’s supposed father, subsequently to his coming up to the passover when Jesus was twelve years of age. There is no mention of him at the marriage at Cana of Galilee, though Mary was there, nor at any of Christ’s public appearances. It is, therefore, unavoidable to conclude that he was dead before our Lord began to preach. At all events, it is plain that he was dead before the crucifixion; for, had he been alive, Jesus would never have recommended Mary to John’s protection. Our Lord may have had an understanding with John before on this subject; now, at least, he intrusts him with the charge, in the most solemn and affecting manner. As to the appellation of “Woman,” with which Jesus accosted his mother, it doubtless had the advantage of not exposing her to the fury of the multitude by a discovery of her near connexion with him; yet it is to be remembered that he addressed her in the same way at Cana, when there was no such danger.† It is to be observed, too, that this title, in ancient times, was not at all disrespectful, but, on the contrary, was in common use, in the most respectful way; being given, for example, by princes to ladies, and by servants to their mistresses.‡ Jesus directed Mary to regard John with maternal affection, and to look to him for the assistance of a son; and he directed John to look to her, and to support her, with all the kindness and care he could have shown had she really been his mother. What an honour was thus conferred on John! And how well did he fulfil the charge! As her Son had not where to lay his head, Mary could have had but little, if anything, to bring along with her for her support; yet John, without objecting to the expense or trouble, took her to live with him in his own house. With the exception of what we read, in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, of her being among the disciples in Jerusalem after Christ’s ascension, this is the last notice of Mary in Scripture. . There is no farther account of her in the earliest ecclesiastical historians: and, of course, there is hardly anything farther in any later writers altogether to

\* Luke ii. 35.

† John ii. 4.

‡ Examples in Blackwall’s Sacred Classics. ‘Ω γυναι is the address of Antenor to Helen, in Homer, and of Augustus to Livia, in Dio Cassius.

be depended on. A writer of the seventh century\* says, that she lived with John at Ephesus, and died there at a very advanced age; and there is a letter of the general council of Ephesus which shows that it was believed, in the fifth century, that she was buried at Ephesus. Others, however, say that she died and was buried at Jerusalem; and many absurd tales have been invented about her death, and the alleged assumption of her body into heaven, which serve, in the opinion of many of the deluded followers of the Pope, to countenance various superstitions connected with her idolatrous worship.

From the conduct of Jesus on this occasion, children should learn to take a tender interest in the happiness of their parents in every way; and, more particularly, every son whose mother is in any degree dependent on him should learn to assist her while he lives, and, if it be in his power, to consult and provide for her support, should he have the prospect of his own death. From the conduct of John in this case, we should learn to honour, and, if need be, to assist, for Christ's sake, those who are spiritually related to him. He says of his disciples in general, "Behold my mother, and my brethren." Let us regard them, and treat them as his friends. If we do, he will say to us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We may also remark here, that when even the mother of Jesus was subjected to such a trial as this, it is not to be expected that the nearest spiritual relation to him will secure his followers from the severest personal and relative sufferings. And yet, the tenderness he manifested on this occasion furnishes all his dependent and afflicted people with an assurance that he is not indifferent to their wants and sorrows, and that he will not leave them destitute, but that he kindly sympathizes with them, and will provide for, and support, and comfort them.

But let us proceed to consider the miraculous darkness mentioned by Luke: "*And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened.*" We formerly noticed that Jesus was nailed to the cross at what the Jews called the third hour, that is, at our nine o'clock in the morning. The darkness began at their sixth hour, that is, at noon, and lasted till their ninth hour, that is, till our three in the

\* Andreas Cretensis.

afternoon. It was not the mere darkness of a cloudy day, however gloomy, but was so great as to be quite extraordinary. That it was not, and could not be, an eclipse of the sun, in the usual sense of the word, and in the ordinary course of nature, is certain from this, that our Lord was crucified at the time of the passover. Now, the first day of the moon being the first day of the month, according to the Jewish way of reckoning, and the passover being fixed for the fourteenth day, the passover, of course, was about the time of full moon. But, eclipses of the sun happen only about the time of new moon, and there cannot possibly be any such eclipse, in the usual sense, at any other period of the moon's age. Therefore, though it is said that the sun was darkened, the darkness could not have been occasioned, like the darkness of a solar eclipse, by the moon coming in between the sun and the earth; but his light must have been intercepted in some other way altogether unknown to us. In short, this darkness was, strictly speaking, miraculous. It seems to have been somewhat like the plague of darkness in Egypt, though, probably, less intense, and certainly shorter in duration; for, whereas this lasted three hours, that lasted three days. This was evidently the immediate hand of God. It was the work of Him who, in the days of Joshua, caused the sun and the moon to stand still, and, in the days of Hezekiah, caused the shadow of the sun to go backward. It was the finger of Him who says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

With regard to the extent of this darkness: according to our version, it is said, in Luke, to have extended over all the "earth;" and, in Matthew and Mark, over all the "land;" but the Greek word is the same in all the three places,\* and may be translated, either, "the earth," that is, the world, or, "the land," that is, country or region. Some think that the whole earth is intended, and that ancient history furnishes sufficient proof of an extraordinary eclipse having happened about that time, and having extended to very remote parts of the world. Phlegon and Thallus, who are said to have lived in the second century, are thought, by some, to have referred to this; but, for anything that appears to the contrary, they may have referred merely to a total eclipse of the sun in the ordinary course of nature, and there is no satisfactory proof of coin-

\* Τῆς γῆς.

cidence as to the time; indeed, the whole question with regard to them is involved, uncertain, and indefinite. There is, however, one account which, could it be relied on, would be exceedingly interesting, and would settle the question as to this darkness, or something very remarkable in the way of an eclipse, extending over distant nations about this time. It is to this effect, that Dionysius, the Areopagite, being at Heliopolis, in Egypt, along with Apolophanes, at the time Christ was crucified, they there witnessed so wonderful an eclipse of the sun, that it led Dionysius to say to his friend, "Either the God of nature suffers, or is sympathizing with one who suffers;" or (as the latter clause is sometimes given), "the frame of the world is dissolving." Little credit, however, is due to this account; or rather, it should be said that there are strong grounds to conclude that the writings attributed to Dionysius are altogether spurious.\* Upon the whole, it seems the more probable opinion that the evangelists mean that the darkness extended over the whole land of Judea, that is, Judea strictly so called, and the neighbouring regions—over all the country in which the gospel had been preached. The same original word is used in this restricted sense, in various other places; for example, in Luke iv. 25: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land," not the whole world, but the land of Israel: and we read of the "land of Canaan," "the land of Sodom and Gomorrah," "the land of Egypt," and the like.

But, whatever may be thought as to this, the claim which this miracle has on our belief, to the extent in which the language employed in the New Testament necessarily implies, is quite independent on any extraneous testimony. In its support, we have the testimony of three historians, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in whom it would have been quite preposterous to have written and circulated such an account so soon after, and in the country to which it referred, if it had not been so well known as to put it out of the power of the enemies of Christ to contradict it: historians, the excellence of whose general character, and the steadfastness with which they adhered to their testimony, most satisfactorily established their sincerity and veracity.

\* This question is fully discussed by Lardner, vol. vii., p. 371, edition 1788.

As to the silence of uninspired Jewish writers, particularly Josephus, on this subject, their prejudices against Christianity rendered them as averse from recording anything favourable to it, as modern infidels are from mentioning occurrences the general knowledge of which would tend to subvert their system and to establish the truth. Even allowing the authenticity of the famous testimony to Jesus by Josephus, which there are strong grounds for questioning, it is very remarkable that an author, who is generally so minute, should refer so little to Christianity, and it can only be accounted for from strong prejudice. But, when such is his silence, in general, if not always, on what relates to the gospel, his silence as to this particular miracle is only what might have been expected on that principle.

As this darkness was so wonderful in itself, it was, doubtless, intended, by Him who occasioned it, to be emblematical of certain important things, and to impress certain sentiments on the minds of those who beheld it, and of those who should afterwards read or hear of it. As a miracle of light accompanied the birth of the Redeemer, so a miracle of darkness accompanied his death. This portentous and dismal appearance may justly be regarded as a divine declaration of the enormity of the crime which was then perpetrating. The sun in the firmament, unable, as it were, to behold the sight, hid his face; and the earth was covered with darkness. This was a token of the dismal and melancholy nature of Christ's death in itself—a death for which all nature went into mourning. This was a fit emblem of the state of the Jewish people, of the darkness that blinded their minds, of the veil that was upon their hearts, of the day of their merciful visitation being past, of the things that belonged to their peace being hid from their eyes, and of the heavy judgments that lowered over their land—a fit emblem of an approaching season which might be called a day of darkness, nay, a night of dismal sorrow. Now the language was literally applicable, which the Lord, by the prophet Amos, employed figuratively to describe the national calamities which he threatened to bring on Israel: "It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." This miracle was a testimony to the divine mission of the illustrious and innocent Sufferer. The darkening of the sun in the firmament was a proof that Jesus was "the Sun of Righteousness," "the Light of the

world," and it testified God's displeasure at men's rejection of that light. It well represented the fearful struggle which was going on between Christ and Satan, as the serpent was bruising the heel of the seed of the woman, and he was bruising the serpent's head. The Saviour had, a short time before, said to his enemies, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness;" and now he was in the fiercest of his wrestlings with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. This miraculous darkness was a fit accompaniment to the state of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, when he was insulted and tortured by men, tempted by Satan, deprived of the light of his Father's countenance, and about to close his eyes in death. It is awful to think (inadequate as our ideas must be) of what must have been the feelings of the Saviour's soul, as it retired within itself, and, under the pressure of sufferings so heavy and so complicated, silently meditated in a horror of great darkness.

We are not told what effect this miracle produced on the cruel bystanders: it is probable that, for a time, it checked their blasphemous rage, and awed them into silence. And well may the thought of it stop the mouth of every ungodly man, and cause him to plead guilty, and to deprecate the divine wrath. It seems as if, because of sin in general, and this enormous crime of the murder of the Son of God in particular, all men and all nature should be dismayed, and mourn before the Lord. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." Let these three hours of darkness forewarn us all of that eternal outer darkness into which those who die in sin shall be cast. Let us tremble at the thought of being found among those for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever: and let us "give glory to the Lord our God, before he cause darkness, and before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while we look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

There was darkness, then, over all the earth, or land, from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour. Here let us take in the following most affecting circumstance, mentioned in Matt. xxvii. 46:\* "And about the ninth hour," or three o'clock in the afternoon, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was the fourth saying of our Lord upon the cross. You are aware

\* And Mark xv. 34.



that the words are quoted from the beginning of the 22d Psalm, other parts of which we have already found applicable to Christ. They are quoted according to the dialect then in common use.

In what sense, it is proper to ask, was our Lord "forsaken"? and what is the meaning of this exclamation? It does not imply, as some have imagined, that his Godhead, or divine nature, deserted his human nature, and left it without support; for that would have deprived it of all its virtue as an atonement for sin, seeing his divine nature, though it could not suffer, strengthened and upheld his human nature to bear the load of punishment which was laid on him, and gave infinite value to his obedience unto death. Neither could the Son of God, as such, and as viewed in himself, be so forsaken of the Father as to cease to be dear to him. He has ever been his "Elect, in whom his soul delighteth." Indeed, the Father was especially well pleased with the Son because of his death: "Therefore doth my Father love me," said he, "because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."\* But the Father forsook him, as not interfering to save his life, and as allowing his enemies to assault him and put him to death; and his divine nature, without allowing his human nature altogether to sink, might so far withhold its consolation as to allow his human nature to be fully and most acutely sensible to suffering. But, farther, his Father forsook him, as withholding from him the usual communications of his love, and leaving him to agonize, without a sense of that love, and under the hidings of his countenance. So David, in his measure, and as a type of Messiah, exclaimed, in the 22d Psalm, and elsewhere,† "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" It seems plain that our Lord would not have expressed himself thus, had he been supported and consoled like the martyrs, who, instead of uttering doleful complaints, rejoiced and triumphed under the most dreadful tortures. In his agony in the garden, there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him; but now there was nothing of the kind. The being forsaken of God, however, implies more than the loss of comfort; for the result is a state of positive distress and sorrow. "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled," says the Psalmist. The leaving of the Redeemer to the rage of his enemies, and the absence of consolation, by no

\* John x. 17.

† Ps. lxxviii. 14.

means exhaust the meaning of his being forsaken of his Father. He now laboured under that awful suffering which arose from the positive pressure of divine wrath for imputed sin. Though the Father loved him as his Son, he smote him as our surety. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." He let in upon him the painful sense of being made a curse for us: and how distressing must that have been to his spotless soul!

The language, "*Why* hast thou forsaken me?" does not imply that Jesus was ignorant of the reason of his sufferings, or required any information on the subject; nor did it express any desire for deliverance before the end was answered: for He who knew all things was quite aware of the important position he then occupied, and he submitted with cheerfulness to the cross. "I am the good shepherd," said he: "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Nor did he thus express any want of trust in God, for he still addressed him as *his* God. This is rather an exclamation, than a question. It is a most emphatical way of expressing the greatness of the sufferings to which he was abandoned,\* though, perhaps, implying that there was no cause for these sufferings to be found in him of the nature of personal sin. Our Lord endured without a complaint the scourge, the cross, the reproach, the desertion of his friends; and the being forsaken of his Father alone extorted from him the cry of distress. The agony which he now endured, appears to have been similar to what he suffered in the garden, though still more intense. This cry may also be considered as a call to his Father to return, and to deliver him, as soon as the end of his sufferings was accomplished. According to this idea, we find the Messiah, under the type of David, going on to say, in the 22d Psalm, "Why art thou so far from helping me?"—"O my strength, haste thee to help me:" and then praising God for deliverance.

What a warning should this cry sound in the ears of the ungodly! If such a cry was extorted by a temporary desertion, how hopeless and doleful will be the condition of those who shall be forsaken of God for ever and ever! Let those who are in danger of this bethink themselves, and act on the persuasion that if they seek God, he will be found of

\* How, or to what, hast thou forsaken me! In Matthew, *iv* 34; in Mark, *ix* 21.

them, but that if they forsake him, he will cast them off for ever. On the other hand, the people of God should learn from this, not to be surprised if their heavenly Father sometimes hide his face from them, and they feel as forsaken. There is sin in them, doubtless, to deserve this; yet they should not altogether despond, but they should endeavour still to regard God as their God. They should pray, "Leave us not, neither forsake us, O God, thou God of our salvation." They should beseech him to return to them in love; and they should seek to recover full confidence in God, through the merits of Him who was forsaken of God, that they might be restored to his favour, and blessed in his presence for evermore.

In connection with this, Matthew and Mark tell us that the bystanders said, "This man calleth for Elias." From their not being near enough to hear distinctly, or from the similarity of the words Eli and Elias, some of them misunderstood what Jesus said, and imagined that he called on the prophet Elijah to come and rescue him, or assist him—a mistake into which they would be the more likely to fall from a superstitious idea said to be then prevalent among the Jews, that Elijah did often succour persons when they were dying. Or, perhaps, some who distinctly heard and understood him maliciously represented his words, "to prevent any serious reflections on the psalm from which they were taken, and to expose him to farther contempt."\*

This seems to be the place, according to the order of time, in which occurred what is mentioned by the evangelist John (xix. 28): "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." This was the fifth saying of Christ on the cross. He was parched with excessive thirst, in consequence of the agony of body and mind which he had so long endured. "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar," near the cross. This liquor is generally thought to have been the sour wine mingled with water,<sup>†</sup> which was the common drink of the Roman soldiers, a vessel of which was brought out on this occasion for the use either of the soldiers who were watching, or of the persons crucified. "And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop," or fastened it to a stalk of hyssop, "and put it to his mouth." In his thus thirsting and having vinegar given to him two prophecies were fulfilled, the one in Ps. xxii. 15: "My

\* Doddridge.

† Posca.

strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;" and the other in Ps. lxxix. 21: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This is another affecting part of the history of the sufferings of the Son of God. He thirsted, that sinners might not be tormented where there is not a drop of water to cool their tongue. He thirsted, that his people might be refreshed with the water of life.

We have only farther to consider, at present, the following circumstance mentioned by Luke: "*And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*" Matthew and Mark say, it "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." This miracle appears, from these two evangelists, not to have happened till Christ expired. It is introduced, therefore, by Luke, not in the order of time, but as of the same nature with what he had stated immediately before. Having mentioned one miracle, he now mentions another. This veil was a curtain, or hanging, which separated between the holy place and the most holy. We find an account of the nature and use of this veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with figures of cherubim, for the tabernacle, in Exod. xxvi. 31; and a similar veil was hung up for the same purpose in the temple. What a miracle, that this curtain of very strong tapestry should thus instantaneously, and without any apparent cause, be torn asunder through its whole length! It is supposed that, this being the hour of evening incense, those priests who were ministering in the temple must have seen the miracle take place, as, doubtless, the high priest Caiaphas and other priests would see the rent afterwards. What amazing prejudice and obstinacy, not to be overcome by such a sight! This miraculous event was plainly typical of several important things.

1. This was a type of the violent *rending of Christ's body on the cross*. In writing to the Hebrews,\* Paul speaks of a "new and living way which Jesus hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." His body was torn by the scourges, thorns, nails, and spear: and his soul and body were torn asunder by death. Let us meditate on this, with faith and gratitude; and let us trust in Him who was thus bruised for our iniquities.

2. The rending of the veil typified *our Lord's own entrance into heaven*. The holy of holies was a type of heaven; and this opening intimated that Christ, having

\* Heb. x. 20.

finished the work given him to do on earth, had entered into glory, and entered to intercede for his people: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."\* He has entered into heaven, not only to receive his own reward, but also to present his sacrifice in our behalf, and to take charge of our interests. Let us improve this idea by rejoicing in his success, and intrusting him with our cause.

3. This miracle intimated that, by the death of Christ, *the ceremonies of the law were, at once, explained and abolished.* Through the rent veil, the furniture in the holy of holies may have been seen by the priests who were in the holy place. So, the meaning of these things, though dark before, was now unveiled. "The veil was done away in Christ." Let us be thankful for this insight into these mysteries, and improve it to the increase of our faith and spirituality. But this intimated that these ceremonies were also abolished. Almost the whole ritual of the law of Moses depended on the distinction between the two parts of the tabernacle and temple; but now that distinction was, as it were, at an end by this opening. The most holy place and its contents being laid open, was as much as to say that the peculiar presence of God was no longer there. The shadows fled when the substance was come. The peculiar sacredness of the place and of the service was at an end. Let us learn, from this, to seek the Lord, not in ceremonial, but in spiritual services.

4. This miracle intimated that *the distinction between Jew and Gentile was at an end.* This was the necessary consequence of the abolition of the ceremonial law; and this the apostle declares to have been the result of Christ's death, in these words to the Ephesians: "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Let us be thankful for this, and rejoice to avail ourselves of this privilege also, that we may be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

5. The rending of the veil typified *evangelical freeness of access to the throne of grace.* The Shechinah, or the glory resting above the mercy-seat, was an emblem of Jehovah seated on a throne of grace, ready to receive, and hear, and bless, those who approach him by faith and

\* Heb. ix. 24.

prayer. The privilege of the Jewish high priest was now laid open, and extended to all believers. Let us improve this, in the way of applying to the Lord, by faith in Christ, for pardon, and by prayer for every blessing. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Once more: The miraculous rending of the veil was typical of *Christ's having opened up, by his death, an entrance into heaven for all his followers*. Heaven was shut against sinners, but he has removed out of the way every obstacle to their present, and of course, to their final, salvation. He has not only brought to light the state of which the holy of holies was a type, but has secured a free entrance into it for his people. Into the second, or inner, part of the tabernacle and temple, "the high priest went only once a-year, not without blood;" "the Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest;" "but Christ, by his own blood, entered once," and once for all, "into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."\* He entered, not only for himself, but for his people, and as their forerunner. Let us think of this blessed truth, and improve it. Let us lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel. Let us look to the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer now; let us follow him as our Prophet, Priest, and King here; so shall heaven, into which he has entered before us, be our everlasting habitation.

\* Heb. ix. 7.

## LECTURE CXXX.

LUKE XXIII. 46-49.

“ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”

OF such importance is even the commencement of an undertaking, that it has become a proverb, “ He who has begun, has his work half finished.” It often happens, however, that human schemes prove abortive, and that the man who has begun an important enterprise under the most promising circumstances, is never gratified with the sight of its completion. The designs of the Almighty are not so. Difficulties apparently insurmountable may lie in the way, but he feels them not. Rebellious men and fallen spirits may strive in opposition to his will; but their weapons recoil on their own heads, while he proceeds majestically to his intended mark. While this holds true in the dispensations of his providence, it is particularly interesting to observe its fulfilment in the work of redemption. Having, of his own unmerited and sovereign goodness, resolved to effect the salvation of certain of the apostate race of Adam, he committed the execution of the infinitely momentous plan to his only-begotten Son. Blessed consideration for us! If we suppose, for a moment, that the undertaking had proved too hard for the Son of God, and that he had failed in the heat of the conflict, how dismal would have been the result! how should we have fallen from the pinnacle of hope, and been plunged into the depths of irremediable despair! No such failure, however, was possible. No disappointment, in any the least particular took place. The Saviour was as powerful as he was humble, as faithful as he was kind. And, when men and devils could do no

more, and infinite justice itself had its satisfaction to the utmost, his eyes, about to close, saw that the day was won, and he exclaimed, in all the majesty of triumph, "It is finished." Luke says, "*And, when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said.*" This has been thought by some to signify, that Jesus spoke with a loud voice the words that follow, namely, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" but, by others, it has been thought to signify that he had previously spoken something else with a loud voice, probably the words, "It is finished." The latter is the idea which our version conveys, though critics have differed as to the exact meaning of the original.\* Matthew says, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." But, whatever may be thought of this, the words recorded in John xix. 30, "It is finished," are too weighty to be passed over by us in a cursory manner. On this sixth saying of Christ on the cross, we observe,

1. When our Lord said, "It is finished," he declared that *the prophecies and types of him were fulfilled*. A rapid glance is enough to convince us of the accomplishment of the prophecies in him. He was born of the tribe and family, in the place, and at the time, foretold. His life was lowly and spotless, and, in every way, as predicted. But it is especially striking to consider how exactly the minute circumstances foretold connected with his death were fulfilled. His being betrayed by his own familiar friend; his being sold for the exact specified sum; the parting of his garments by lot; the particular kind of death he died; the insults and cruelties to which he was exposed; his being numbered with the transgressors; the drink offered to him; the precise words he spoke—in short, the whole history of the case was an exact accomplishment of prophecy. With this is closely connected the fulfilment of the types. Here we have a satisfactory following out and explanation of the whole figurative scheme, which would

\* *Και φωνησας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, εἶπε.* Dr Campbell's translation is simply, "And Jesus said with a loud voice, Father," &c. Dr Macknight says, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell us that, in speaking these words ("It is finished"), Jesus cried with an exceeding loud voice."—The use of the word in the first Aorist, *φωνησας*, is in favour of our version, rather than the other; *Ἡ δὲ ἀναβησασα μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ, Με μοι προσίτε, φησι, Σηρα*—Polybius, xv. 27; which words are thus translated by Raphelius: *Illa clamore edito, Ne me, ait voce alta, O feræ accedatis.* In Matt. xxvii. 46, the form of expression is different, *Ἀνεβήκει ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, λυγρῶν ἧλι,* &c.



otherwise have been unintelligible, incomplete, and inefficacious. Here we behold the brazen serpent lifted up, the rock smitten, the true priest, the real atonement and purification, the passover lamb—the substance, in short, of the whole typical system. Let us carefully mark these wonderful coincidences, that we may more and more clearly perceive that “the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy,” that he is indeed the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and pointed to in the types, and that it is vain to look for another.

2. This saying declared the blessed truth, that *the meritorious work of redemption was completed*. That his people might have a perfect righteousness, he fulfilled the law, and suffered, in their stead. He was yet alive, it is true, but he had nothing to do but to die. He had taken the cup, and was drinking it off to the very dregs. He was paying the last part of his people's debt. Already he saw them restored to favour, the Holy Spirit descending to sanctify and comfort them, and the gates of heaven opening for their reception. He saw that the merciful object which he had been contemplating from eternity was gained; and, with feelings of which a mind so exalted and so benevolent was alone susceptible, he joyfully exclaimed, “It is finished!” Let it be finished also in our estimation; and let us have done with every other trust, and close unhesitatingly with this. But, how difficult is it to humble the mind sufficiently for this, and to bring ourselves to feel that there is nothing left for us to do in the way of meriting pardon and life! In this respect, everything is done already—all is paid; and it is for us to rely with confidence on this finished work.

3. By the exclamation, “It is finished,” our Lord signified that *the legal dispensation was at an end, and the gospel completely and permanently established*. The Mosaic dispensation, having answered its end, was to retire. Excellent as it was for the purpose intended, it was never meant to be permanent. Exactly adapted, for the time, to the circumstances of one nation, it was too dark, too burdensome, too confined, for a universal religion. It was a matter of course that, when the true Deliverer was come, and the true Sacrifice offered, all that was preparatory should cease to be observed. Daniel predicted that, when Messiah was cut off, he should “cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” “He taketh away the first,” says Paul to the Hebrews, “that he may establish the second.” That which,

from this moment, was no longer binding, was soon rendered impracticable by the overthrow of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the dispersion of the Jews. The hour of Christ's death was, also, the commencement, properly speaking, of the gospel dispensation. This is the most important epoch of history. Compared with this event, as to benignity and extent of influence, the changes of reigning families and of forms of government, and all the revolutions of empires, are but trifles; for now that reign commenced which was never to see an end, and which is destined, in the gracious purpose of God, to be submitted to with joy by those of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Is it so that the legal dispensation is at an end?—let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not be entangled in the yoke of bondage. We are under no temptation to adopt the Jewish ritual; but let us beware of a legal spirit, and hold to the simplicity of evangelical truth. How thankful, too, should we be that we live under the gospel dispensation! Let us carefully improve our great privileges, and rejoice in the assurance of the permanency and coming universality of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Finally here, when our Saviour said, "It is finished," he intimated that *his own sufferings were all over*. His sufferings were just coming to a close; and, in a few moments, they were actually at an end for ever. How pleasing to all his people this consideration! All the waves and billows of man's cruelty and God's wrath went over him; but henceforth, while endless ages last, not one wave of trouble shall pass across his peaceful breast. God forbid that he should have still continued to suffer for us, or that he should have been a loser on the whole! "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame; and he is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Come, then, ye that love him, and let us rejoice together; for he that redeemed us was soon set free, and is now enthroned in light, and glory, and happiness, unutterable and eternal.

But let us proceed to consider the words which, according to Luke, Jesus uttered immediately before he expired: "When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*." This was the seventh and last saying of Christ on the cross; and surely it was most becoming and appropriate in his case, and is still most instructive to his followers.

Observe the title by which he addresses God—he invokes him as his “Father.” He was the Son of the Father in respect of eternal generation and miraculous conception. Though, as the surety of sinners, he was forsaken of his Father, he never ceased to be dear to him as his Son, and never lost his confidence in him; and now he expresses that confidence in the use of this endearing name. Observe, farther, that he speaks of his “spirit,” or soul. He took on him the human nature entire, both soul and body. In his agony, his “soul was exceeding sorrowful;” and now his “soul is made an offering for sin.” He distinctly intimates, too, that his spirit was not to be annihilated by death, but was to exist in a state of separation from his body. Mark, also, how he “commended” his spirit into his Father’s hands. He committed it to his powerful and kind care; he intrusted it to him as a sacred deposit, in full confidence that he would receive it to himself, and secure its safety and happiness in the meantime, that on the third day it might be re-united to his body. This shows where Christ’s soul was between his death and resurrection—it was in heaven with his Father, as we also inferred from his saying to the penitent malefactor, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

These words were evidently adopted by our Lord from the 31st Psalm, 5th verse, where they are spoken by David, in his own person, and with a primary reference to his own case, but also in his character as a type of Christ, though our Saviour omitted the latter part of the verse, probably, as not so exactly applicable to his case. The whole verse runs thus: “Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Now, though there is much in these words peculiar to Jesus as the only begotten Son of the Father and the Saviour of sinners, yet the use of them by the Psalmist, in the first instance, and the general idea of Christ being our pattern, call on us to regard them as placing several things before us for our instruction and imitation. If, for instance, we be the children of God by regeneration and adoption (of which Christ did not stand in need), then we, like Christ, and according to the nature of the relation subsisting in our case, are warranted, nay, required, to cherish a filial spirit, and to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father. If we have Christ for our Saviour, then we have God for our reconciled and gracious

Father in heaven. "I ascend," said Jesus, "to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." And this filial confidence we should cherish and express, even in the darkest hour. "Though he slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in him."

Farther, as our Lord took on him the human nature, and was made like his brethren, sin only excepted, we are here reminded that we, too, have immaterial and immortal spirits, that shall survive our bodies, live in a state of separation from them for a time, and be re-united to them at the last day. We are reminded that the soul is the noblest part of our nature, that it takes the lead in our history, and that, if we desire the permanent welfare of our bodies, we must attend first to our souls. We ought to feel the greatest anxiety about them, in all circumstances, and especially in the approach of death. It is natural that we should desire our bodies to be decently attended to, and disposed of, when they are deserted by our spirits; but of how small consequence is this in comparison of the safety of our immortal souls, to whose destiny our bodies are linked! Our corpses will be equally insensible to honour and to neglect, and our souls will be far removed from the sublunary sphere of both. It will not gratify us should our funeral obsequies be gone about expensively, and our remains deposited in a stately tomb; nor will it pain us should our bodies be put out of sight in the most careless manner, and our bones scattered at the grave's mouth. Let us remember this; and, whatever may become of us and of our concerns in other respects, let us make our souls our chief care. Particularly, in the prospect of dissolution, let us solemnly commit our spirits into God's hands, and that not in ignorance and unbelief, but in the light and faith of the gospel. Let us connect our trust in God with the doctrine of redemption, as did the Psalmist, when he added, "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." God, by redeeming us, has acquired a right to our souls, so that it is our duty to commit them to him; but this consideration also furnishes the most powerful encouragement to us to do so. Similar to these were the words of Stephen before he fell asleep: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Let us consider, however, whether we have any reason to think that we shall be privileged rightly to do this with our last breath, if we neglect it till then; and let us give up our souls to God now. Let us heartily yield ourselves to th:

Lord, while it is called to-day. Let us commit our souls to him to be pardoned, sanctified, sealed, and prepared for his presence. Let us "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator." If we do so, each of us may say, with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day"—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

Our evangelist adds, concerning Jesus, that "*having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*" Different expressions are employed by the evangelists to signify the death of Christ. Mark and Luke employ a word,\* the exact translation of which is, "He expired." The literal translation of the phrase in Matthew is, "He dismissed the spirit," or "his spirit;" and in John, "He gave up," or "yielded up," or "delivered up the spirit," or, "his spirit."† The forms of expression used by Matthew and John are considered, by some, as intimating that Jesus died by a voluntary act of his own mind. They may have been intended to signify this, but that they do not necessarily signify it, appears from the circumstance of similar expressions being employed to denote the death of ordinary persons.‡ At the same time, the idea in question is a correct and very important one, and is abundantly confirmed in various ways. The circumstance just mentioned of Jesus crying out so loud, immediately before he died, was a proof of this, as it showed that much of the strength of nature still remained in him, and that he could have continued to live longer, if he had been so disposed. He died voluntarily, beyond a doubt. "I lay down my life," said he, "that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."§ This was necessary to render his death a meritorious sacrifice.

That he should actually die, was necessary for various reasons. Death was the punishment annexed to the breach of the law; and as Jesus was to deliver us from the curse of the law, it was necessary that he should undergo this

\* Ἐξέπνευσε.

† Matthew, ἀφῆκε; John, παρέδωκε το πνεῦμα.

‡ It is said of Rachel, in the Septuagint, Gen. xxxv. 18, Ἐγενετο δὲ ἡ ἐν ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν. Examples are also quoted from Herodotus and Euripides. See Elmer, Dr Campbell, &c.

§ John x. 17.

penalty. It was "through death" alone that he could "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." This was necessary to fulfil the prophecies which declared that Messiah should "pour out his soul unto death," and be "cut off." It was necessary to fulfil the typical sacrifices, in which the animals were slain. And this was necessary to his resurrection; for it is obvious that had he been only in a swoon, or temporary suspension of vital functions, there could have been no proper resurrection of his body, and our preaching and faith would have been vain. Now, that he did really die, we have the most satisfactory evidence. All the evangelists declare it. Reference is habitually made to his death in the other inspired writings of the New Testament, as the central point, the glory, of the Christian system. His enemies never denied it: nay, they put it beyond a doubt by their own conduct and confession. John says,\* "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with him" (as they were still alive). "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. Thus two scriptures were fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." Thus, too, his death was sure; for the wound made by the spear, having pierced his heart, would have been mortal, though he had been in full strength. And what an event was this—the death of the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God! This wonderful event was accompanied with several wonderful signs. We formerly noticed the miraculous darkness, which began at noon, and continued three hours, till the moment of his death; and also the miraculous rending of the veil of the temple, which took place when he expired. In addition to these, Matthew says, "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and appeared unto many."

Luke goes on to say, in the 47th verse, "*Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous person.*" While Luke speaks

\* John xix. 32.

of the centurion being impressed by everything he saw on the occasion, it appears, from Matthew and Mark, that he was especially struck by Christ's so crying out with a loud voice, immediately before his death, and by the earthquake. He declared Jesus to have been a righteous, an innocent, a just person. Matthew states that the centurion, and they that were with him, also said, "Truly this was the Son of God." If the centurion spoke in the ignorance of heathenism, his words only signified that he considered Jesus as something more than a man, or the son of a god; but if, as is more probable, he was aware of his claims as Messiah, the words were a full acknowledgment of him as such. To confess Christ in this manner, was indeed to glorify God; for, "he who honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father also."

*"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."* Very many of them smote their breasts, in token of their grief and horror at the cruel indignity shown to one to whom so wonderful testimonies were borne from heaven; and, probably, from an apprehension of awful judgments falling on their countrymen because of the atrocious murder.\* The recollection of what they saw, and heard, and felt at this time, would, in some measure, prepare them for the reception of the truth on the subsequent preaching of the apostles, and outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

*"And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."* What *their* feelings must have been may be conceived, but cannot be described. Some of them were near enough, for part of the time at least, to hear Christ speaking from the cross; but they generally kept at a considerable distance, probably, lest, if seen to take a very deep interest in him, they should be apprehended as belonging to his party. They beheld, but they could not help him. When Jesus suffered, his best friends were mere lookers on. The very angels could do nothing; they, too, stood trembling by. He trod the wine-press alone; and his own arm wrought salvation. †

We too, my friends, have been, as it were, beholding that amazing sight; that is, we have been considering the inspired history of the death of Christ; and, surely, we

\* See this expression illustrated in Lecture xciv. on Luke xviii. 13.

† Henry.

should regard it, not as a spectacle of mere curiosity, but as deeply interesting to ourselves; and we should, with the utmost care, improve it, both doctrinally and practically. It is true that most of the inferences to be drawn from it have already, more or less, forced themselves (if we may so speak) on our view; but it seems now proper to state the chief of these more formally, though it must still be briefly.

1. See here *accumulated evidence of the truth of Christianity*. The various circumstances we have been considering are a clear proof that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. The Jews in general, no doubt, drew a very different conclusion from the whole. They imagined that all his pretensions were exposed, and that his boasted kingdom was overthrown. He himself was disgraced, rejected, condemned, and crucified; and his followers were few, poor, and scattered. The unbelieving Jews were, therefore, fully persuaded that he was not that mighty Deliverer whom they expected. Their ignorance and prejudice, however, must have been great, else they must have seen that it behoved the Messiah to do and suffer the things which Jesus of Nazareth did and suffered. Think of the fulfilled prophecies already noticed. Think of his demeanour throughout the whole of his passion. Think of the miracles that accompanied his death. Think of the testimony borne to him by the centurion and his party. Think of these things separately, and in their combined force; and then, to what conclusion can you come, but that this was the Son of God, and that you should receive him as your Lord and Saviour?

2. See here *the true atonement for sin*, and receive it by faith. "Who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" Natural evil is the consequence of moral evil. It is only because of sin, too, that men die: "The wages of sin is death." Now, here we see Christ suffering and dying; but where was his sin? "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." There is no way of accounting for this but on the principle of his being our surety and substitute, and undergoing the punishment due to us for our sins. And this is what Scripture everywhere teaches. The legal sacrifices pointed to the death of Christ as the true sacrifice. Prophets foretold, not merely his death, but his death as an atonement. Isaiah says, "He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken;" and Daniel,



"Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." His fore-runner said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Jesus himself said that he came "to give his life a ransom for many." The apostles direct us to him as having "died for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God;" as having "borne our sins in his own body on the tree;" and as having "redeemed us unto God by his blood." This is the grand doctrinal fact, the leading point, the most essential characteristic of the gospel; and this is taught, not merely that we may not deny it, but that we may study it well, and believe it, and obtain the benefit of it. God hath set Jesus forth (be it observed) "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."—"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Believe this, and it will bring you pardon and peace. Believe it, and it will win your hearts to God, and secure your safety for ever.

3. See here, and admire, *the love of the Father, and of the Son to perishing sinners.* This display of the Father's love far surpasses any other which he has given. The atoning death of Christ is not to be considered as the original spring, or moving cause, of God's determination to save sinners; but rather, as the result of that determination which originated in his sovereign grace, and the particular way in which he has resolved that the purpose shall be brought to bear, so that his mercy may be exercised in consistence with his justice, and the honour of his law. How amazing that the Father should, for this purpose, and for wretched sinners like us, give up his Son to death, even the accursed death of the cross! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And, what above everything shows the greatness of the Father's love in this gift is that it is the pledge of every other; for, "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely

give us all things?" Glory, then, be unto God the Father, for such love, for ever and ever!

How amazing, too, the love displayed by the Son in dying for us! From all eternity this love existed. He foresaw the misery we were to bring on ourselves; he purposed to redeem us; and, with the perfect knowledge of all he had to pass through, he never shrunk back, but persevered till the work was accomplished. Now, we have heard of men dying for their friends; but where do we hear of any man dying for his enemies? "while we were yet sinners," however, and therefore enemies, "Christ died for us." Never was there love like this—it passeth knowledge. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

4. See here *the certainty and the dreadful nature of the punishment of the obstinately wicked, in the other world.* As our Lord himself said before, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If God spared not his own Son, will he spare his obstinately rebellious enemies? If the wrath of God was so terrible to his Holy One, what will it be to the ungodly? Who will be able to stand in the Lord's sight when he is angry—in the sight of him who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; who toucheth the hills, and they smoke? Let none of you indulge the dreadful delusion that you may continue in sin, and yet escape. You may be at ease in unbelief and sin, for a time; but the end of these things is death. Now you may laugh and rejoice, but assuredly you shall have weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Fear shall come upon you as desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind. The hand of God is lifted up against you; and if it fall, it will crush you into perdition. The same sword of divine justice which awoke against the man that was God's fellow, will awake against you, and cut you off. There will be this awful difference, however: Christ's sufferings had an end—yours shall have none. No more the bloody sweat bedews his body; no more is he a reproach of men, and despised of the people; no more is he racked on the cross, and forsaken of his Father. *He* said, "It is finished;" *you* never, never shall. Wild despair shall tear your hearts; and while endless ages last, no ray of hope shall dawn on your forlorn condition. Will you, then, be so infatuated as to persevere in your sinful course, and in keeping at a distance from him who alone can save you?

5. See here *your example*. We have already noticed several circumstances in the demeanour of our Lord in his last hours, calling for the imitation of his followers, particularly his forgiveness of his enemies, his care of his mother, and his commending his spirit into his Father's hands. What I chiefly refer to at present is his patient submission to his sufferings. We are too ready to retort trivial slights; but he calmly submitted to the greatest indignities. We are ready to murmur and faint under light afflictions; but he was torn with scourges and thorns, had his hands and feet pierced with nails, underwent the most inconceivable agonies and the most excruciating death, with perfect resignation. In the words of Paul to the Hebrews, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." And in the words of Peter, "Even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." In reference to whatever troubles God may send on us, let every one of us endeavour, in his strength, to say, with Jesus, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

6. See here *the most powerful motives to repentance, the mortification of sin, and the prosecution of holiness*. What a call is here to repentance! Here we see the evil of sin in general, and of our own sins in particular; for, however we may blame the Jews and Romans as the instruments, our sins were the procuring cause of Christ's death. Let us look, then, on him whom we have pierced, and mourn. What inducements here also to mortify sin and follow holiness! By the cross of Christ, let the world be crucified to us, and us to the world. Let our old man be crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that henceforth we may not serve sin. Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Every one of his followers, therefore, ought to be able to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Hence let us draw our chief motives to the cultivation of all the graces, and the discharge of all the duties, of the Christian life. Let "the love of Christ constrain us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that

they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

In the last place, see here *every encouragement to perishing sinners to come to Christ for safety, and to believers to rejoice more and more in confidence in his merits.* His atoning death lays a solid foundation of hope; and, as we have already said, he is "set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that he came into the world, suffered, and died, to save sinners, even the chief of them. And those that "come to God through him, he will in no wise cast out." Look, then, to him, you who have never done so before—look to him, and be saved. Come to the fountain opened in his blood for sin and for uncleanness. Come, and welcome. Instead of being displeased, he will be gratified, with your approach; for, when he sees the travail of his soul, he is satisfied. And what encouragement and consolation does the death of Christ furnish to you who, by faith in it, are reconciled to God! He has satisfied divine justice; therefore you shall never feel its penal effects. You are sprinkled with his atoning blood; therefore you shall escape unhurt. Let his death continue to be the ground of your hope, and the well-spring of your life. "Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." In life he will be with you, and in death you shall depart to be with him, which is far better. If you suffer with him, you shall also reign with him; and a happy transition that will be, for he has exchanged a cross of ignominy for a throne of glory. Now, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

## LECTURE CXXXI.

LUKE XXIII. 50-56.

“And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: 51. (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. 52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54. And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. 55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath-day according to the commandment.”

HAVING, in the last lecture, contemplated the amazing event of Christ's death, we are now to consider the circumstances of his burial. Let us endeavour, by divine assistance, to do so with suitable feelings.

Our Lord expired about the ninth hour of the day, that is, about three o'clock in the afternoon. Now, there was an express enactment in the law of Moses against the bodies of executed persons being left exposed all night: “If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree” (the usual practice of the Jews was first to stone the criminal to death, and then to hang up his body), “his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God), that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”\* And here it is proper to observe what is stated in John xix. 31, “The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that Sabbath-day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” In addition to the express law, which was applicable to

\* Deut. xxi. 22.

every day of the week, a strong reason for the immediate removal of these bodies was, that the next day was the seventh day of the week, or the Jewish Sabbath, and that, too, a more than ordinarily solemn Sabbath, as it was the Sabbath in the passover week, when such a multitude were assembled at Jerusalem from every quarter, and the Sabbath on which was presented the sheaf of the first-fruits. John then gives an account of the breaking of the legs of the two malefactors, and of the piercing of Christ's side with the spear, which we formerly noticed. What the enemies of Christ would have done had all his friends stood aloof, we cannot tell; but as, on other occasions, some of those who are in some way connected with those who have suffered, generally interpose, so it was here. Joseph of Arimathea was the first to come nobly forward to care for the dead body of the Redeemer; and, as the Jewish Sabbath would commence at sunset, after which no work could lawfully be done, there was no time to lose. "After this," according to John, that is, after Christ's side was pierced with the spear; or, according to Matthew, "when the even was come," the word "even" being used with considerable latitude, and what they called the first evening, including the latter part of the time during which the sun was declining—Joseph stood forward in the most commendable way.

We are furnished, in a few words, with a very distinct account of several particulars of this man's history and character, which it is proper to mark: "*And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor.*" Some\* think that the title of "counsellor" implies that Joseph was one of those whom Pilate consulted in the management of the affairs of his province, and especially in judging causes. Another opinion is, that Joseph was one of a select number that were consulted by the high priest.† But the most common idea is, that Joseph belonged to the sanhedrim, or supreme Jewish council of seventy. At all events, it is stated afterwards that he was a member of a council who had condemned Christ. Mark‡ styles him "an honourable counsellor;" where the word "honourable" seems to be employed, not as a usual complimentary epithet to whatever

\* Dr Macknight, &c.

† Lightfoot on Mark says, "He was a priest, and one of that sacerdotal bench."

‡ Mark xv. 43. *Εὐσεβήμων βουλευτής.*

person might hold that office, but as intended to intimate that he was a peculiarly respectable man. On one occasion, our Lord's enemies put the question in a tone of malicious triumph, "Have any of the Pharisees, or of the rulers, believed on him?" It is true that the great majority of men of note rejected him at first, and continued to do so; and in general, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." It was no sufficient objection to Christ that the self-righteous, the worldly, and the prejudiced, rejected him. It was enough if the humble and simple-hearted believed. Some of the rulers, however, did indeed receive Christ; we are sure that this was the case with Joseph and Nicodemus. Nor, as containing a testimony to Jesus Christ, however unsatisfactory as to the persons themselves, are we to overlook what John\* says, after speaking of the general unbelief of the Jews: "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also," or, even among the chief rulers, "many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Matthew† tells us that this Joseph was "a rich man." Wealth is a great snare, and, by its abuse, proves a great curse to many. Yet it is "a price put into a man's hand to do good"—an opportunity of much usefulness; and it is well indeed when it is used for the honour of Christ.

Luke farther designates Joseph as "*a good man, and a just.*" These two words may be intended to express general excellence of religious and moral character; or, if we are to distinguish nicely between them, "good" may signify benevolent, and "just" may signify upright, though this latter word often includes conscientious strictness in religious duties. These features combined form a truly amiable and respectable character; and this character we should all study to attain, and constantly to exemplify. Such was Cornelius; for he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always;" and, brought to the faith of Christ, he became an eminent disciple.

Verse 51: "*The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them,*" that is, of the rest of the counsellors who condemned Christ to death. Whoever consents to any bad measure, either by voting for it, or silently agreeing to it,

\* John xii. 42.

† Matt. xxvii. 57.

or not endeavouring to prevent it, is guilty, and chargeable with the result, though he do not propose it, or speak in its support, or assist in carrying it into execution. The high priest and others who took the lead in compassing Christ's death, were eminently guilty; but his blood was on all who went along with them, or who did not try to prevent the crime. Saul of Tarsus was guilty of murder, both when he stood by "consenting unto Stephen's death," and keeping the raiment of them that slew him; and when "the saints were put to death," "he gave his voice," or vote, "against them." It becomes judges to be especially careful not "to decline with many to wrest judgment;" and in every case where it is in any way applicable, the warning of the wise man should be scrupulously attended to: "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." What attempts Joseph may have made in Christ's favour we know not, though the account given of his character justifies the belief that he not only did not vote against him, but tried to save his life. It is probable that Joseph and Nicodemus,\* finding all their remonstrances vain, declared their dissent from what was going on, and withdrew from the council before the sentence was passed; for Mark† says, "They all," that is, all the counsellors who were present, "condemned Jesus to be guilty of death." It is a relief to the consciences of individual members of deliberative bodies to have the opportunity of signifying their disapprobation of decisions which they consider wrong; and the blame and evil consequences of bad measures are not to be imputed to those who dissent from them and protest against them.

Luke mentions that this Joseph "*was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews.*" This is understood to have been the same city which was called Ramah, and Ramathaim-Zophim, in the mountainous country of Ephraim—the birth-place and usual residence of Samuel.‡ As Joseph was a common name among the Jews, it is usual to call the person in question Joseph of Arimathea.

"*Who also himself waited for the kingdom of God;*" for the kingdom, or reign, of God, that is, for the establishment of the new dispensation of religion under Messiah, according to the Old Testament prophecies. He waited for this in earnest and believing expectation, and was looking for it about this time. Thus, Simeon is said to have been "a just and devout man, waiting for the consolation

\* See John vii. 50.

† Mark xiv. 64.

‡ 1 Sam. i. 1, vii. 17.



of Israel;" and thus Anna, the prophetess, "spake of Jesus to all them that looked for redemption in Israel."\* The evangelist John† is still more explicit, and says that Joseph was "a disciple of Jesus"—one who had learned of him and embraced his doctrine; but he subjoins this qualification, that he was a disciple "secretly, for fear of the Jews." This was a sinful weakness, though now he rose nobly above it. So some true Christians are, doubtless, deficient in courage; yet they improve in this respect. It sometimes happens, too, that those whose courage has failed them in slight dangers and difficulties, have been enabled to show themselves very bold on great and peculiarly trying occasions. It is sometimes seen, likewise, that those who are considered chief men fail, while the feeble are bold as a lion. Thus it now was with the apostles on the one hand, and Joseph on the other. There is something at once very humbling and very encouraging in this. All are dependent on God for strength according to their day. Let the strongest trust solely in him. And let no child of God despond, but let the weakest look to God, and he "shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." These remarks, however, must not be abused to encourage indecision and cowardice. Let us beware lest, if we do not confess Christ now, he do not confess us before his heavenly Father. If we have hitherto been irresolute, let us feel it to be our duty to rise superior to our fears, and to be "strong in the faith, giving glory to God." As for Joseph, he was a sincere disciple; and, however irresolute he was before, he now stands forth, in a conspicuous way, to show his regard for Christ.

*"This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus."* Mark says, "He went in boldly unto Pilate:" and it certainly required much courage in Joseph thus to expose himself to the displeasure of the Jewish rulers. In this he pursued the right course, as he did not attempt to seize the body surreptitiously, or violently, in defiance of lawful authority, but acknowledged the power of the civil magistrate. As for the Romans, they often left the dead bodies of persons who had been executed, to hang till they wasted away, or were devoured by birds of prey; and they, probably, would have given themselves no concern in this instance. As for the unbelieving Jews, had the business been left till they took it up, they might have savagely insulted the dead body of Christ, and certainly would not have

\* Luke ii. 25-38.

† John xix. 38.

buried it in a respectful way. Mark mentions that when this application was made to Pilate, "he marvelled if Jesus were already dead," or, that he was so soon dead; as persons affixed to the cross generally lived much longer. Pilate, being determined to make himself sure, sent for the centurion who had the charge of the execution, and, learning from him that Jesus had been dead for some time, gave the body to Joseph. The governor may have been the more ready to comply with this request, as he had condemned Christ contrary to his own conviction. Having thus obtained leave, Joseph proceeded, with some assistants, to take down from the cross the sacred body, in order to bury it with all respect. "But who can describe their consternation and distress when they saw him, who they trusted should have delivered Israel, a cold and bloody corpse in their arms,"\* and proceeded to lay him in the sepulchre of Joseph, whom they expected to have seen on the throne of David?

"*And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen;*" in Mark, the word is rendered "fine linen;" Matthew calls it "clean linen." The kind of linen here mentioned was sometimes very expensive; but Joseph thought nothing too good for such an occasion. We learn hence that we ought to serve our Lord with the best of everything. The way of using the linen was to cut it into narrow bandages, and to roll the whole body in it,† as infants are sometimes wrapped in swaddling-bands. Thus, when Christ cried, "Lazarus, come forth"—"he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. And Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Here comes in, according to the order of time, what is stated in John xix. 39: "And there came also Nicodemus, (who at the first came to Jesus by night,) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound

\* Doddridge.

† Herodotus, (lib. ii.) says that the Egyptians wrapped up the corpse in this way, after having washed it, Δουσάντες τον νεκρον, κατελίσσουσ παν αυτου το σωμα σινδονες βυσσινης τιλασμοισι κατατιτμημεναι. The words in Luke are, 'Εντυλίξεν αὐτο σινδονι. The circumstance mentioned by John of Lazarus' dead body being bound about the face with a napkin, finds an illustration in Lucian De Luctu, Διχλωυσι δὲ ἡ ἰδου, καὶ τὰ ἱεῖα, οἷς μου τας σιαγονας ἀπισφιγῆσαι, "Sed prohibebant (scilicet quo minus riderem) linteum et lanæ quibus mihi fauces adstringistis."

weight." He too, though once a timorous, now becomes a bold disciple, and comes forward to assist Joseph in preparing the body of Jesus for burial. The quantity of spices here mentioned may seem larger than was necessary; but it appears that it was customary to testify more than ordinary respect for the dead by providing a more than ordinary quantity of costly aromatics for their funeral.\* John says, "They wound Christ's body in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury," or rather, to prepare for burial. They rolled up the spices hastily with the body, time not permitting them to go about the whole operation of embalming.

Luke says Joseph "*laid it*" (the body) "*in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.*" The words in Matthew are, He "*laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.*" Here let us make a few remarks on the burying of the dead.

It is a consideration which ought to stain the pride of all human glory, that, however honoured, or beloved, or beautiful, any of our friends may be during their life, they are but for a very short time tolerable after their breath is fled. Sarah was "a very fair woman to look upon," and, on her death, Abraham mourned and wept; yet he soon said to the sons of Heth, "Give me a possession for a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Another and a more pleasing motive, however, prompts to this, namely, a regard to their memory: we wish our friends not only put out of sight, but disposed of decently and solemnly. Different customs in this respect have prevailed in different nations, and at different periods. One of the most ancient seems to have been interment; not, however, always putting them into the earth, as is most usual with us, but often putting them into caves or vaults, dug under the surface of the earth, or in the sides of rocks and rising grounds. Sarah, for example, was buried in a cave in the field of Machpelah; and the field and the cave therein were made sure to Abraham for a possession of a burying-place.† The same mode continued to be frequently adopted by the Jews. We see that the body of Jesus was thus deposited. So also was the body of Lazarus: John says, "Jesus, groaning within himself, cometh to the grave; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." In these two last

\* See Jos. Antiq. Lib. XV. iii. 4; Lib. XVII. viii. 3.

† Gen. xxiii.; John xi. 38.

cases, it is plain that coffins were not used. The Greeks, and the Romans from them, usually burned their dead. The body was laid out in a stately manner, to view, for a considerable time. After many ceremonies, the funerals were generally gone about with torch-light. The body was carried out and burnt on the funeral pile, which was a large heap of wood. The ashes were extinguished with wine, and, along with the unconsumed bones, were carefully gathered up, and put into the urn, which was made of potter's earth, marble, brass, silver, or gold, according to the wealth or grandeur of the families. The urn was placed in the sepulchre, which, in the case of the rich, was an elegant building above ground, and in that of the poorer classes a vault under ground. Language borrowed from this mode of burying the dead has been retained, when the mode itself is laid aside; as in the words—

“Can any following spring revive  
The ashes of the urn?”

The custom of burning the dead was gradually discontinued as Christianity spread; and now simple interment in coffins, though not the universal, is the usual mode. This custom is very proper and natural, and is much in accordance with the sentence, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The Egyptians, generally embalmed their dead; that is, prepared them with various operations and compositions, to prevent them from consuming. Thus it is said in the last verse of Genesis, “They embalmed Joseph, and put him into a coffin.” In modern times, bodies have been found in the Egyptian catacombs, or vaults, in a state of wonderful preservation, which must have lain there for many hundreds of years. There seems no good reason to wish for this kind of posthumous corporeal existence. Rather, when the life and comeliness of the body are fled, the sooner it moulders so as not to be distinguishable from its kindred dust, so much the better. It will be enough if our bodies be united to Christ; for, though this will not prevent them from crumbling into dust, it will insure their rising in immortal beauty. The custom of embalming was also observed by the Jews when they wished to show much respect to the dead; and they seem to have sometimes gone about the whole operation with much care, and at other times to have performed it only partially, being even contented, in some cases, with wrapping the body in the cloth with spices, or putting the spices into the coffin, when a

coffin was used. It is possible that Joseph and Nicodemus may have intended to do something more afterwards; but as "*that day was the preparation,*" or the day before the Sabbath, "*and the Sabbath drew on,*"\* they took the body into the garden, which was just at hand,† and, having speedily rolled it up in the linen with the spices, as already noticed, they, without farther ceremony, deposited it in the tomb. This unostentatious and private funeral became the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though infinitely glorious, was meek and lowly in heart, and whose "kingdom cometh not with observation." It is also to be noticed that this embalming, partial as it was, testified the love, rather than the enlightened faith of these disciples; for had they been aware and fully believed that Jesus was not to see corruption, but to rise again on the third day, they would have perceived that no spices were necessary. They acted, however, affectionately, according to their light at the time, and were, no doubt, accepted in what they did.

The grave was, doubtless, providentially ordered; and it was the very best that could be conceived. It was a cave dug in a solid rock, which could not be entered by stealth or sudden violence, from behind, and into which there was no entrance except by the mouth or door; so that the body could not be carried away while the door was kept shut and guarded. It was a cave in which none had been buried before; so that when a resurrection took place, it could not be said that it was that of some other person.

In this burial the prophecies were fulfilled which required that Messiah should not only be put to death, but be actually buried. The type of Jonah required Christ to be a certain time "in the heart of the earth." The 22d Psalm foretold that he was to be "brought into the dust of death." And Isaiah says,‡ "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;" that is, he was put to death with two malefactors, and buried by a rich man.

Joseph, assisted by Nicodemus, having thus deposited our Lord's body, "rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed." The remains of human beings should be taken care of, and decently interred, according to the customs of the country, if these customs be not superstitious. Common feeling and the belief of the general resurrection require this. But, as to enshrining, and wor-

\* *Ἐξέσπυρσι*, was lighting up. See criticisms by Dr Campbell, Clarke, &c.  
 † John xix. 41.  
 ‡ Isa. liii. 9.

shipping, and ascribing miraculous virtue to the bodies of the dead—however much they may have been esteemed when in life—nothing of this should be done; nothing of the kind was done even to the body of the Saviour.

Verse 55: "*And the women also, who came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.*" It does not seem that John remained to observe what became of the dead body of his Master: the women, however, who had so closely followed him, were not absent at this time, nor ignorant of what was doing. Matthew names among the women present, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, that is, Mary the mother of James and Joses: as he makes no mention of Mary the mother of Jesus, it is supposed that she was so worn out by the painful scene she had witnessed, as to be unable to remain so long. The affectionate women were, no doubt, pleased with the attention which had been already paid to the body of Jesus by Joseph and Nicodemus—an attention as great as circumstances permitted at the time. Observing, however, that they had not, properly speaking, embalmed the body, but only wound it in linen with spices, they resolved that the last office should be performed in a more complete manner. "*And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments;*" they went into the city without delay, and, that same evening, before the hour of the Sabbath, they provided a quantity of the necessary articles, that they might be ready to return to the sepulchre very early on the first day of the week. "*And,*" having made this preparation, "*they rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment.*" They spent the Jewish Sabbath in the usual sacred rest, in cessation from all worldly employments, even from all farther manifestations of respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this they did according to the commandment which was first given at the creation of the world, when God rested from all his works, and blessed the Sabbath-day, and sanctified it, or set it apart for himself; and which was thus solemnly renewed from Mount Sinai by the mouth of the Lord God, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy."

And now, my friends, let us meditate seriously on the pervading topic in this passage, namely, *the burial of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. This was the last step in his humiliation; and a wonderful step it was. The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his

person, the only begotten Son of God, the divine Redeemer, is laid a corpse in the dark and silent tomb! It would have been great condescension in him to have allowed his body to be deposited in the sepulchre of the kings, and with the utmost splendour; but how very striking his funeral in so plain a way as this, at the expense of others, and in the sepulchre of a stranger! As in life, so in death, the Son of man had not where to lay his head. Let this teach us humility. Let the burial of the Lord Jesus lead us to think of our own burial, and to prepare for it. In this step, as in others, he was made like his brethren. We should also regard Christ, in his burial, as consecrating the grave as a bed of rest for his followers, and divesting it of its terrors. If we are united to him, we need not be afraid to enter the tomb after him; for, that will only be to be conformed to our divine Head; and, as he rose victorious, so shall we. In reference to this he said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," or the state of the dead, "neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But more of this, if it please God, hereafter. "We leave, for the present, Christ's enemies in triumph, and his friends in tears, till his resurrection." \*

Allow me, in concluding, earnestly to press on you the duty of *the strict observance of the Christian Sabbath*. You have seen how Joseph, and Nicodemus, and the women, went quickly about their pious work, that it might be over before the Sabbath commenced; and how the women rested on the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment. You have seen how the day before the Sabbath was called "the preparation;" and you may remember how the Israelites, in the wilderness, gathered twice as much manna on the sixth day of the week as on any other, and prepared their food for the rest of the holy Sabbath.† Learn hence to prepare, as to your outward circumstances, and your state of mind, for the duties of the Lord's-day, and to resolve to dedicate it entirely to religion. The women would not even go about the embalming of Christ's body on the day of rest: so, work in preparing for funerals, and in actually going about funerals, except in cases of absolute necessity, is unsuitable for this day.

But contemplate this subject in a more general view, and

\* Doddridge.

† Exod. xvi. 22.

## LECTURE CXXXI.

— this one fixed point—the *perpetual and universal obligation of the Sabbath*. The doctrine of the perpetual and universal obligation of the Sabbath is proved by its original institution. The reason of its appointment as a commemoration of the creation existed from the first, and is equally applicable to all nations. That an additional reason for its observance by the Israelites was found in their deliverance out of Egypt, does not invalidate the primary reason. A presumption in favour of this doctrine, as well as of its earliest possible origin, arises from the fact that *almost all the nations of antiquity had a weekly division of time*, or regarded the seventh day as holy. Hesiod and Homer, who are, probably, the earliest uninspired writers, both say, “The seventh day is holy.” “The Phœnicians consecrated one day in seven as holy,” says Porphyry. “The seventh day is the day which all mankind celebrate,” says Theophilus of Antioch. “A seventh day is observed among holy people,” says Linus. “The seventh day is given to school-boys as an holiday,” says Lucian. “The Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, observe the seventh day as holy,” says Clemens. “Almost all the philosophers and poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy,” says Eusebius. “No city of Greeks, or barbarians, can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh day’s rest from labour,” says Josephus. “The seventh day is a festival to every nation,” says Philo. Now, it is to be observed, that as there is not the same foundation in nature for the division of time by weeks, as by days, months, and years, the division by weeks must have been by some positive institution: besides, though in some cases the idea may have been borrowed from the Jews after the time of Moses, when we consider its very early and very extensive prevalence, and the general aversion of the nations from Jewish customs, this observance must, in most cases, have had a different origin, namely, tradition through Noah and his family. This doctrine is also established by *the place assigned to the commandment relating to the Sabbath in the moral law*. The essence of the commandment was that some part of our time should be devoted to God, and that being strictly of moral obligation could not be cancelled. What was positive in the law was, that the proportion of time should be one day in seven, and that the particular day should be the seventh, or last of the week: this was of a nature which might be altered, and it has been altered by divine authority, in so far that, though the proportion is the



same, the first day of the week is now fixed on, which being substituted for the seventh, answers the purpose of commemorating the creation of the world, but which, being the day of the week on which the Redeemer rose from the dead, also commemorates that most important event.

Now, from this one leading doctrine it follows that the rules for our observance of the Christian Sabbath should be drawn from all that is written, in any part of Scripture, with regard either to the Jewish Sabbath or the Christian Sabbath, which is more properly called the Lord's-day. It should be observed as a day of *rest* from all worldly employments, and also from recreations, or "finding our own pleasure," as it is expressed in Isaiah. To speak of innocent recreations of a worldly nature on the Sabbath, is a contradiction in terms. It should be observed as a day of *public and private exercises of worship*. Unquestionably, with the exception of works of necessity and mercy, which are not only lawful, but incumbent, the standard of duty here ought to be the consecration of the whole day to the Lord, in thought, word, and action.

Hence appears the futility of all the arguments for the lax observance of the Lord's-day, in particular of that drawn from *the example of foreigners*. It is too true, that in some countries which bear the Christian name, the Sabbath is wretchedly desecrated. Multitudes pay no respect to it whatever, while many exhibit only a very partial respect. Many persons from this country who resort to those lands, though, at first, hurt by customs so contrary to those which early education has taught them to regard as right, become familiarized to what they see. They cease to be offended; they adopt the practice themselves; they return to their native land, habitual and systematic Sabbath-breakers; and it is not unusual with them to endeavour to subvert the pious principles of their countrymen. "You are mistaken," they will say, "in the rigid notions you have adopted. You are imposed on by narrow-minded men, who know nothing of life. Go and see the world; or believe those who have seen it. Consider the opinions and customs of other Christian nations, and you will be undeceived. You will put away your illiberal and sour notions; and Sunday, instead of being to you a day of loathing, of moping, and of melancholy, will be, what it ought to be—a day of enjoyment and of cheerfulness." On this style of talk it may be remarked, that the gross public, national, and allowed pro-

fanation of the Sabbath has prevailed, chiefly, in those countries where the Holy Scriptures, which are the only rule of judgment in this case, are least known, and where unjustifiable encroachments on the ordinary business of life by saints' days have thrown a great obstacle in the way of the due sanctification of the Sabbath—that is, in Popish countries; or, among such Protestants as are, in other respects, careless and heterodox, and who are tainted by intercourse with the other party. It were easy to bring forward the best human authorities in support of the full sanctification of the Sabbath; but it is the shortest and best way to rest the doctrine, at once, on the Word of God. As to the objection which may be heard from various quarters, that so strict an observance of the Sabbath would render it a day of gloom, and excite a dislike to all its exercises: it is true that there are many who have a strong aversion from such a way of spending the day. “They say, What a weariness is it! and they snuff at it:” and they say, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and set forth wheat?” But what does this prove? and how can this be remedied? It does not prove that the doctrine we are advocating is false, for, the divine commandment must remain in full force, whether it please the taste of such persons, or not. Nor can this dislike ever be remedied by departing from the true doctrine; for, that would be, not to reconcile careless men to the Sabbath, but to give up the Sabbath to please careless men. Certainly, the employments of the Sabbath ought to be judiciously managed, and properly diversified, and none of the direct exercises of religion should be unreasonably protracted; but, to yield up any thing of the *principle* of the Sabbath—to allow that any part of the day may innocently be diverted from a sacred to a common purpose, that be far from us. The plain truth is, that the dislike in question is only one of many symptoms of a general state of alienation from God. In order to such persons being brought to relish the Sabbath, something more than an argument on this one point is necessary, namely, a radical change of state. Their minds must be enlightened in the knowledge of the gospel, their hearts must be renewed, they must be reconciled to God, and they must be brought to delight in the law of God in the inward man. Were this happy change to take place in them, they would then count the Sabbath a delight. But what can be more plain than that as, in their alienated state, they cannot enjoy the Sab-

bath on earth, so neither could they enjoy the Sabbath of heaven? May the Lord turn the hearts of such persons to himself!

How great the guilt and danger of those who are decidedly Sabbath-breakers! The Jewish law ordained that the Sabbath-breaker should be stoned; and there is an instance recorded of that statute being carried into execution.\* Hence (though that particular punishment is no longer inflicted) may be inferred the heinousness of the crime in the sight of God. Its perpetration leads to every other iniquity:—it is, indeed, the highway to ruin. Let those who set this command at nought, reflect, and blush, and be afraid. No rebuke would be too sharp for them, no upbraidings too keen. But, for love's sake, we rather beseech them.

Let those of you who are conscientious in this respect feel admonished and encouraged. Study to be more and more exemplary in all your private and domestic arrangements, and in all your public observances. Contrive to dispose your worldly affairs on the preceding day, so that they may not encroach on the proper business of the Sabbath: and, when the Sabbath actually arrives, instead of inquiring, with many, what ordinary things you may do on that day without being guilty of sin, let your inquiry be what of them you may defer till to-morrow. Think of the reasonableness of the commandment, which requires only a seventh part of your time: and think of the advantages of this institution, both in a spiritual and temporal point of view. Lord, grant that a stop may be put to the progress of Sabbath profanation amongst us, and that the dutiful observance of this day may yet be acknowledged to characterize the hamlets and the cities of our happy native land. May our Scottish Sabbaths be Scottish Sabbaths indeed! Never may the day come when foreign opinions and foreign manners shall displace the truly Scriptural sentiments, and the truly Scriptural customs, which, along with the most precious civil and religious privileges, come down to us recommended by the example, and sealed by the martyrdom, of our forefathers.

\* Numb. xv. 32.

## LECTURE CXXXII.

LUKE XXIV. 1-12.

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. 2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments; 5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

WE have already contemplated the only begotten Son of God in that depth of his humiliation—his death and burial: we now come to consider the first step of his exaltation—his glorious resurrection. Let us enter on the subject with a deep sense of the importance of the event in itself, and in its consequences. It is one of the great hinges on which the whole plan of salvation turns. Give this event its proper place, in connection with our Lord's atoning death, and all is harmony and hope; take this event away, and what remains but confusion, darkness, and despair? “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;” “ye are yet in your sins,” “and they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”

In prosecuting this subject, we shall not go over the verses now read in the exact order in which they lie, but proceed in the way of distinct observations, under the illustration of which will be introduced, not only every thing

contained in this passage, but the greater part of what is elsewhere stated in connection with this event. May the Spirit of the living God cause us, even now, to feel the blessed efficacy of this grand doctrinal fact. May the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." May we "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

We observe,

I. That *Christ's resurrection was distinctly and repeatedly foretold*. It was foretold in the 16th Psalm, as quoted and explained in Acts ii. 24-32: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," or the state of the dead, "neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." "David seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ." It was foretold in the 68th Psalm, in which it is said, "Thou hast ascended up on high;" for, his ascension presupposes his resurrection. It was foretold in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, where it is said, that, after his soul shall be made an offering for sin, "he shall prolong his days." It was foretold by himself, when he said, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;" when he said, "Destroy this temple," speaking of the temple of his body, "and in three days I will raise it up;" and when he said, expressly and repeatedly, that he should be killed, and be "raised again the third day."\* To these predictions by Jesus himself, the angel thus refers, in the 6th and 7th verses of the passage before us, "*Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*" It is true that the disciples "understood none of these things," at the time they were spoken.† But Luke now adds, "*And they,*" (the women) "*remembered his words.*" We know, too,

\* Matt. xvi. 21, xvii. 23, xx. 19.

† Luke xviii. 34.

that the disciples not only remembered these sayings of Christ, but at last understood them, and had their faith confirmed by them. After relating what Jesus said concerning "the temple of his body," the evangelist John\* adds, "When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." Now, this is a consideration of importance to us in the way of the confirmation of our faith. The resurrection of Christ being thus distinctly and repeatedly foretold, prevented any surprise, and led to the precautions of which we shall soon speak. Thus, too, his resurrection is of weight, not only as a miracle, but as a fulfilment of prophecy, and is possessed of double authority. As in many other instances, so here in a remarkable degree, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

II. *Christ's enemies took every precaution to prevent deception.* They were sure that he was actually dead. Had he been only in a swoon, he could not have had a real resurrection. But we are told that though the soldiers brake the legs of the two malefactors, they brake not his legs, for "they saw that he was dead already." One of them, however, inflicted such a wound with a spear, on his side, as would of itself have been sufficient to kill him. Pilate, too, was at pains to ascertain that he was indeed dead, and learned that he was dead for some time, before he gave leave to remove the body. We have seen that the body was buried—that it was really deposited in the tomb. This, it is implied, if not positively stated, in the narrative, his enemies would ascertain; for, what could have been the use of securities, if they had not been certain that what they wished to secure was actually there? Quite aware of what he had foretold, they were in no degree taken by surprise, but, on the contrary, adopted the strongest and most decided measures to prevent imposition. The account which Matthew gives is as follows: "Now, the next day that followed the preparation," that is, on the Jewish Sabbath, "the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead;

\* John ii. 22.

so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.\* The guard of soldiers was intended to prevent the disciples from carrying away the body, and the seal was chiefly intended to be a security against unfaithfulness to their trust on the part of the soldiers.\* The priests and Pharisees doubtless intended to visit the sepulchre after the third day had elapsed, in the hope of finding the dead body there, and showing it publicly; which would certainly have been a complete refutation of Jesus' claims. Vain, however, were these precautions. The divine purpose and power were not to be defeated by a band of soldiers, or a seal. Yet, in one sense, these precautions were not vain, for all this excessive care did not prevent our Lord's resurrection, but it strengthened the evidence that it really took place. Here the Lord took the wise in their own craftiness, and caused the wrath of men to praise him.

III. *Several circumstances connected with Christ's resurrection demand particular notice.* One of these is the circumstance of *the time* when he rose, namely, the third day after his death. He was crucified on the Friday, and he rose again on the Sunday, the first day of the week. He tasted of death, and was laid in the grave; yet he did not lie so long as to putrify, or see corruption. He rose exactly at the time predicted. He said, it is true, that he was to be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;" but that saying was, of course, consistent with his other saying, that he was to rise again the third day. The Jews, not having a single word to express the natural day of twenty-four hours, used the circumlocution of a day and a night; and, counting inclusively, our Lord lay in the grave part of three natural days, though the period, strictly speaking, included only two nights, one whole day, and part of two other days. We have an example of these two forms of expression in the Book of Esther.† "Fast ye for me," said she, "and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so I will go in unto the king:" accordingly, we afterwards find it stated that she went in to the king "on the third day." In the exact time of our Lord's resurrection, we see an in-

\* Obsignate cellas, referte annulum ad me.—*Plaut. Cas. II. i. 1.*

† *Esth. iv. 16, v. 1.* See also *1 Kings xx. 29; 2 Chron. x. 5, 12,*

stance of divine foreknowledge and arrangement, and another fulfilment of prophecy.

Another circumstance connected with this great event is *the ministration of angels*. These holy beings were ever ready to attend and serve the Son of God. They made known his conception and birth; they worshipped him after his temptation; they strengthened him in his agony; and now they ministered at his resurrection. Matthew says,\* "And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Luke says, "*Behold, two men stood by them,*" (that is, by the women,) "*in shining garments,*"—evidently two angels. "*And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth*"—for even pious persons were usually filled with fear on such appearances—the angels kindly accosted them, and said "*unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen:*" and, as in Matthew, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Then, according to Luke, and as we have already noticed, the angels reminded the women of what Jesus had said before his death; Matthew tells us that the angel said, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

The visible presence of angels on this occasion was a convincing evidence of an interposition from heaven; we must observe, however, that though the instrumentality of angels was employed in rolling away the stone, Christ was raised, not by angelic, but *by divine power*. None but that God who bestows life at first can restore it when it is altogether lost. It is frequently declared in Scripture, without reference to the distinction of persons in the Godhead, that God raised Christ from the dead. With such a reference, however, it is said that he "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." His resurrection is ascribed to his own power, when he says of his life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again;" and when he says of his body, "In three days I will raise it up."† And yet, we are told, "that being put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit." In this, these three were

\* Matt. xxviii. 2. † Rom. vi. 4; John x. 18, ii. 19; 1 Pet. iii. 18.



one, and agreed in one. And here we have at once, information on the subject of our Lord's resurrection, and a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, which ought not to be overlooked.

The following circumstance, mentioned by Matthew,\* also demands attention: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." We are not told who these saints were, or what became of them; and it must be of very little use to conjecture. It is very generally thought that they were pious persons who had died but a short time before, and who were still remembered in the world; and that they were removed to heaven without tasting of death again, either after appearing once, or about the time of our Lord's ascension. This astonishing event was, plainly, a glorious display of Christ's triumph over death and the grave. In this, he already began to reap the trophies of his victory.

IV. *There is abundant evidence that Christ actually rose again.*

First of all, it was universally acknowledged that his body was gone from the sepulchre on the third day. Next, the way in which his enemies attempted to account for this was quite absurd and contradictory, and became, in fact, a confirmation of the account which the evangelists give of his resurrection. His enemies gave out that his disciples stole away his body while the soldiers were asleep. How preposterous the theory! Was it at all likely that the same persons who had lately forsaken Christ and fled, would now be so daring as to venture to approach the sepulchre with such an intention, guarded as the sepulchre was? Had there been only one soldier on the watch, it is not likely that he would have fallen asleep, when, according to the Roman law, the punishment for falling asleep on guard was death. The number, however, of soldiers employed was evidently considerable, and it is quite incredible that they should all have fallen asleep. But, on the supposition that they did all fall asleep, how could they know what took place during the time they slept, or be capable of giving any evidence on the subject? Though an attempt was made to subvert the belief of the resurrection of Christ in this way, there can be no doubt that Matthew gives the true account of the business. "Now, when they were going," that is,

\* Matt. xxvii. 52.

when the women were going to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard, "some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." That this report was propagated by the Jewish rulers with great industry, appears from Justin Martyr, who says that they "sent chosen men of considerable rank over all the world, not only in general to represent Christianity as an impious sect, but to assert that the body of Jesus was stolen from his tomb during the night, and that those who stole him thence took occasion from this to give out that he rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven." Whatever influence this wretched expedient might have in blinding the minds of those who were desirous of being deluded, it cannot impose on any unprejudiced person, nay, it goes entirely in support of what it was intended to overthrow.

We say that there is abundant positive and unexceptionable evidence of our Lord's resurrection. Suppose we heard it said that a certain person had lately risen from the grave: what would be the best way of convincing us that he had actually done so? Would it not be to see him ourselves, if we had been acquainted with him previously, and had known that he was dead and buried? or, if we had not known him personally, to have the testimony of others who had? Now, Jesus Christ was seen, after his resurrection, by many who knew him before, and who were fully aware of his crucifixion and burial; and we have their testimony transmitted to us in a genuine and authentic manner. Many of his appearances after he rose again are recorded, and these, too, interwoven with many confirmatory circumstances. We have the evidence of *the women* who went to the sepulchre, and who told what they had seen and heard to the disciples, several of whom committed their testimony to writing. We formerly noticed the preparation made by the women more completely to embalm our Lord's body; and Luke goes on to say, in the beginning of this chapter, "*Now, upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had pre-*

pared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout" (for even true Christians often perplex themselves about what should encourage them), the angels informed them that Christ had risen, as we have already noticed. We are also told that, according to the direction of the angels, "*they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.*" Luke gives us the names of some of these women: "*It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, who told these things unto the disciples.*" Mark\* also names Salome. We have the evidence of Peter thus given by Luke: "*Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.*" The evangelist John† states this more fully, and mentions how he himself was along with Peter on this occasion. "*Then she*" (Mary Magdalene) "*runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter, therefore, went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*" There is a circumstantial minuteness about all this account that bears the stamp of truth: in particular, the circumstance of the linen bandages and the napkin being so carefully disposed of, proved that no haste or perturbation had been manifested (as must have been the case had the body been theftuously snatched away), but that Jesus had risen with the utmost dignity, calmness, and composure. Had the body been stolen, it would either have been carried off suddenly, as it was, or the clothes would have been left in careless confusion.

\* Mark xvi. 1.

† John xx. 2.

And now, to mention the actual appearances of our Lord after his resurrection: no fewer than eleven are distinctly recorded. He appeared to Mary Magdalene by herself—to Mary Magdalene in company with other women—to Peter—to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus—to the apostles when Thomas was absent—to the apostles when Thomas was present—to James—to the apostles at the sea of Tiberias—to above five hundred brethren at once—to the disciples at his ascension—and last of all, to Paul on his way to Damascus.\* Here we may observe, that what infidels have sought to represent as a formidable objection, is a decided advantage, namely, the proof of his resurrection resting, not on his appearance to undefined and promiscuous multitudes, but on a somewhat limited, though abundantly sufficient, number of persons intentionally fixed on for the purpose. There is a familiar saying, that what is every body's business is nobody's business. Instances have occurred in which it has been exceedingly difficult formally to prove what was notorious to a whole city, or country; whereas, it is easy to establish by proof a fact to which the attention of a certain number of people has been particularly directed, and who can be pitched on for the very purpose. The number of witnesses in this case amounted to many hundreds; but of these the apostles are to be considered as the chief. To this effect, and in illustration of the excellence of this mode of proof, the following passages from the Acts of the Apostles,† may be considered: "To whom," that is, to the apostles, "he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."—"Wherefore, of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."—"And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

As the number of witnesses was abundant, so their qualifications were complete. They had the best opportunities

\* 1 Cor. xv. 5-8.

† Acts i. 3, 21, x. 40.

of knowing our Lord, both before and after his resurrection ; and they could not be mistaken. They were not weak enthusiasts, carried away by a heated imagination ; but they were cool and sensible men. They were not of a credulous mind, they were not easily persuaded ; but they were slow of belief to an unreasonable, and even criminal, degree, and they did not yield till the evidence was overpowering. Luke here states, that when the women told the apostles that Christ was risen, "*Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.*" Jesus thus addressed the two disciples on the way to Emmaus : " O fools, and slow of heart to believe ! " and Mark \* adds, that when they told the rest of the disciples that he had appeared to them, they did not believe them. The incredulity of Thomas was especially great. He would not be convinced by any evidence but that of his own bodily senses ; and his unbelief did not give way till Jesus stood before him, and said, " Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing." As they were not weak, deceived men themselves, so neither were they wicked and worldly men, seeking to deceive others. Their general history proves them to have been men of probity and piety, men of true virtue, and men of simplicity and honesty, who could appeal to those who knew them, and say, " Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves." Their veracity was such, that they recorded their own mistakes and sins. They had, as to worldly things, nothing to gain, but everything to lose, by the course they pursued. They all forfeited the esteem and favour of their nation ; and most of them forfeited their property, their liberty, and their life. And, for what sinister object is it possible that they could have exposed themselves to such treatment ? Surely, the vanity of becoming the founders of a new system would have been a cause altogether inadequate to such an effect. Besides, that idea would involve the incredible supposition, the flat contradiction, of a system of perfect piety and morality (for such is the gospel) established on a foundation of lying imposture. The apostles and other inspired men did not defer their open testimony by word and writing till many years had elapsed, and till it would have been difficult to detect them, had they been endeavouring to impose false-

\* Mark xvi. 13.

hood on the public; but they published the facts, and doctrines founded on these facts, immediately, in their preaching, and at the very time and place, and among the very people among whom Jesus had lived; and several of them soon committed an account of the whole to writing: so that every facility existed for exposing the deception, had any deception been practised. As they were not deterred from bearing witness for Christ by sufferings foreseen, so neither did they fall from their testimony because of sufferings when they came. They knew that they had only to say that Jesus had not risen from the dead, and that they would then be safe; but nothing could extort from them such a declaration—they were faithful in adhering to their testimony, even unto death. Christ's resurrection was also confirmed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and all the subsequent miracles. Peter said, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." The accession, too, of so many to the faith of Christ, in so short a time, ought to be considered as an argument in favour of the reality of his resurrection, which was so intimately interwoven with the whole system. Not only did a small number of intimate and original followers adhere to him, but thousands were converted to him in a few days after his ascension. Of the very people who were guilty of shedding his blood, very many received him as their Redeemer and their Lord. Judaism, to which they were so devoted, was deserted by them; their prejudices and hatred gave way before the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah; they forsook all for his sake; they entered on a new life of faith and holiness; and they adhered to him in defiance of all opposition, and in the midst of tortures and martyrdom. How varied, then, and how full, is the evidence of our Lord's resurrection! No event whatever in ancient history is so well established as this. And these are only mere hints on topics which have been expanded into many excellent treatises.

But, let us not dismiss the subject without considering its practical bearing.

1. In the fact of Christ's resurrection, we have the great *proof of his divine mission, and a call to submit to him as our teacher and Lord.* It is true that every miracle

wrought by him, or in his name, furnishes a proof of the same truth, and a call to the same submission; but this may justly be called the leading miracle, as it is more expressly fixed on, and more prominently set forward, than any other, both by our Lord himself and by his apostles. On one occasion, when the Jews said unto him, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things?" Jesus answered, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." On another occasion, when certain of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Master, we would see a sign from thee;" he answered, "There shall no sign be given, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." In accordance with this, the Apostle Paul says to the Romans, that Jesus Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." If any doubt remained, it must have been dispelled by his resurrection. Thus, too, the scandal of the cross was wiped away, and Jesus is seen to be in every view most glorious. We must not rest, however, in speculative opinion, or with the mere verbal acknowledgment of Jesus' Messiahship; but we must improve this as a grand influential truth. As he is thus proved to be the Son of God, let us receive him as such. As he is the great prophet, or teacher, let us listen to his instructions. As he is the Saviour, let us seek salvation through him. Let us see that we be of those of whom he says, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

2. Let us improve this event as a demonstration that *Christ's sacrifice was accepted, and an encouragement to trust in his righteousness for justification.* "If Christ be not raised," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." But, as Jesus undertook, so he finished, the work of redemption; and his being raised from the dead by the power of God, proved that his atonement was accepted, and that those who have faith in his blood are safe. In this way, his resurrection, as well as his death, is connected with the justification of his people. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."\*. The release of the surety showed that the debt was paid. Being called, then, to believe in him, let us rest in his finished work, and rejoice in his salvation. Thus shall we have peace and safety, and be able to join in the triumphant language,

\* Rom. iv. 25.

“ Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again.”

3. The resurrection of Christ is *connected with the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath*. The general nature of the institution, being the dedication of a seventh part of the time to God, is not affected by the particular day of week fixed on. There was an obvious use in the change of the day, for distinguishing Christians from unbelieving Jews. Redemption, too, was a kind of new creation. It is foretold that the work of redemption should be commemorated, even beyond the work of creation. Thus saith the Lord, “ Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.”\* It is predicted in the 118th Psalm, that the day of Messiah’s exaltation should be held sacred to the Lord: “ The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” Jesus Christ twice met his disciples when they were assembled on the first day of the week.† We read that “ upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” At the beginning of the book of the Revelation, we find this day called “ The Lord’s-day.” Ignatius, who was contemporary with the apostles, says, “ Let us no more Sabbathize,” or keep the Jewish Sabbath, “ but keep the Lord’s-day, on which our Life arose.” Justin Martyr, who lived during the close of the first, and the beginning of the second century, says, “ On the day called Sunday, there is an assembly of all who live in the city, or country, when the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read.” Subsequent authorities need not be produced. What a blessing is the institution! Let us conscientiously observe it for the glory of God, for our own spiritual good, and for communion with the Church of Christ.

4. Let us see that this event have its proper *purifying effect on our heart and conduct*. We are called to be conformed to the image of Christ in general; and we are particularly called to be conformed to him in his death and

\* Isa. lxy. 17.

† John xx. 19, 26.



resurrection. In the words of the apostle to the Romans,\* "We are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—"In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." Let us consider well if this be our character, and if we be making this practical improvement of the resurrection of our Lord. In vain shall we profess to trust in the merit of his death, if we do not rise from the death of our own sinfulness to a life of true holiness. Well will it be for us if "the love of Christ constrain us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ presents *the pattern and pledge of the happy and glorious resurrection of all his followers*. There will be a resurrection "both of the just and of the unjust;" "They shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." How delightful, then, the security of Christ's people that their resurrection will be the resurrection of the just—a resurrection unto life! He is their head; and he having risen, they, as the members of his body united to him, shall rise with him. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die," that is, all whom Adam represented, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive," that is, all whom Christ represents. "But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." And then, in the subsequent part of the same chapter to the Corinthians, the apostle describes the happiness and glory of those who are raised up in the image of the heavenly Adam, and the song of triumph which shall be sung when death is swallowed up in victory. We are assured that the same power which raised up Christ, will

\* Rom. vi. 4-13.

raise up his people: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."\* With this view, let us secure an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and see that he dwell in us by his Spirit and by faith. To this great event let us look forward; and for this great event let us live. Let our conversation be in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Well may this hope animate us to cherish the spirit and adopt the language of devout thankfulness: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Lastly. The resurrection of Christ should *keep us in mind that we shall stand before him as our judge*. He is risen as the reward of his humiliation. Because he humbled himself, therefore God hath highly exalted him. His resurrection was but the first step in his exaltation. God not only "raised him from the dead," but "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." There he reigns, and will continue to reign; but the great manifestation of his glory will be at the last day. "To this end," says the apostle to the Romans,† "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Let us weigh this truth well. As surely as Christ rose from the dead, so surely will he come to judge us. Let this thought encourage his believing and obedient people. They shall not only rise gloriously, but be acquitted and applauded before assembled worlds. The Judge is their friend, he is well pleased with them, and all will be well. On the other hand, let this thought sound an alarm in the ears of the unbeliev-

\* Rom. viii. 11.

† Rom. xiv. 9.

ing and ungodly, and stir them up to repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. "The times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."\*

\* Acts xvii. 30.

## LECTURE CXXXIII.

## LUKE XXIV. 13-27.

"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. 14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19. And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. 22. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; 23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. 25. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

THE faculty of speech is very useful, and very ennobling. The Psalmist calls it "the glory" of man. It is the index of intelligence. It enables us, as it were, to enter into each other's souls; and it contributes, in an incalculable degree, to the improvement and happiness of the present life. But, right reason, so far from being confined in its exercise to perishing things, stretches its contemplations to the great Creator, and an unseen world; and it must surely be reasonable to employ the faculty of speech on those subjects on which reason itself is properly employed. If true wisdom consist in pursuing the best ends by the best means, what wisdom is equal to that of being wise for eternity? what

exercise of speech so rational as that which agitates this momentous inquiry? Besides, as God is the author of this faculty, who is so well entitled to its acknowledgment? Observe, too, how men proceed in the affairs of common life. When a number of persons are exposed to some temporal danger, do they not consult each other as to the means of escape, and warn the unwary to flee? But, we are all exposed, by sin, to the wrath of God; and should we not commune together on the gracious method of deliverance, and thus remind one another to provide for our endless safety? If, again, a number of persons, who had all received a similar favour from some generous benefactor, met together, and made no mention of his kindness, who would hesitate to pronounce them ungrateful? Unspeakable is the gift God has bestowed on us; and shall we have nothing to say about the Father who gave, or the Son who was given? The advantages, too, which flow from attention to this duty form a cogent argument in its support. It increases knowledge in ourselves and others. "The lips of the wise," says Solomon, "disperse knowledge;" and, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning." This also gives life and readiness to whatever knowledge men possess, and helps to stir up their languid graces. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

What reason thus approves, Scripture enjoins by precept and example. Moses said,\* "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." We are enjoined to "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." David says, "My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise, all the day long." The queen of Sheba "communed with Solomon of all that was in her heart:" "he told her all her questions;" and she found that his wisdom exceeded the fame which she had heard. Jesus Christ, our perfect pattern, has left us many examples of this; indeed, a great portion of his time was employed in this familiar way of imparting instruction. Witness his conversations with Nicodemus, with the woman of Samaria, and with his

\* Deut. vi. 6.

disciples on various occasions, both before and after his resurrection. What subjects are talked of by angels, appears from their words to Abraham, to Lot, to Daniel, to Zechariah, to Zacharias, to the Virgin Mary, to the shepherds of Bethlehem, to the women at Christ's sepulchre, to the witnesses of his ascension, and to the beloved disciple. What words are heard in heaven may be learned from the book of Revelation. It is also worthy of remark that when, on an extraordinary occasion, two of our race, who had already entered into heaven, again appeared on earth, redemption was the subject which employed their tongues. On the mount of transfiguration, "behold, there appeared unto Jesus two men talking with him, Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." As for the passage before us, it is just a beautiful and edifying example of the duty, and of the good effects, of religious conversation. May the Lord bless to us our meditations on it at this time!

*"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs."* "Two of them," that is, two of the disciples. We are informed, in a subsequent verse, that one of them was Cleopas. It is generally allowed that this Cleopas was also called Alpheus, and that he was married to "the other Mary," and was the father of James the less, and Jude.\* We are not told who was the other disciple; and conjecture would be useless. They "went," or were travelling, "that same day;" that is, on the day our Lord rose from the dead. They were going "to Emmaus." There was a place, altogether different from this, of the same name, which was afterwards called Nicopolis, and which lay at a much greater distance from Jerusalem. This village lay to the north of Jerusalem. It is worthy of being noticed that Josephus agrees exactly with Luke as to the distance, and says, "Emmaus is distant from Jerusalem sixty furlongs."† Sixty furlongs are equal to about seven miles and a half. We are not told what was the reason of their journey. Though true disciples, they were of weak faith and little light; it is, therefore, probable that they had left Jerusalem, and were retiring to their home, under the influence of fear and sorrow, doubt and partial unbelief.

Weak and disconsolate, however, as they were, their conversation proved that the cause of Christ was still near

\* Compare Mark iii. 18, xv. 47; John xix. 25. † Wars, VII. vi. 6.

their hearts. "*And they talked together of all these things which had happened.*" They were conversing about the things which the evangelist has just related regarding the crucifixion of Christ, and about the report which had reached them of his resurrection. They were talking with deep interest on these subjects, as involving the fulfilment, or disappointment, of their fondest hopes. "*And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*" While they were talking over the death of Jesus, and arguing as to the probability or improbability of his resurrection, he himself joined their company, as a traveller going the same way; and this he did with the gracious intention of clearing up their doubts, and re-assuring their hearts. His joining them thus may fairly be considered as a testimony of his approbation of the way in which they were employed at the time, and, of consequence, an encouragement to Christian intercourse and communing. His personal presence, it is true, is not to be expected now, for "him the heavens must receive" and retain, "till the time of the restitution of all things;" but his special and gracious spiritual presence may be looked for by all who engage in pious discourse. His presence, in this sense, is promised, whether the number uniting be great or small. His words are, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—"I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you."—"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—"We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

"*But their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.*" Mark,\* who only alludes to this part of the sacred history very briefly, says, "After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." It appears to me that, instead of making one of these modes of expression to bend to the other, the better way is to understand them both exactly in their natural sense, as intimating that the appearance of our Lord was somewhat different for the time, and also that the eyes of the two disciples were so far affected or restrained, that, from the two circumstances taken together, they could not recognise him. But, whatever way it may have been, so it was that they did not know him; and this

\* Mark xvi. 12.

afforded him a most favourable opportunity of drawing them out in unrestrained conversation. And so Jesus Christ is sometimes graciously present with his people when they know it not, or may even be thinking that he is far from them. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," said Jacob at Bethel; "how dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

*"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"* He accosted them in a kindly way, inquiring what subjects they were conversing about, and adverting to the sorrow which he knew reigned in their hearts, and which would, no doubt, be marked in their countenances. No wonder that, with their love and their weakness of faith, they were sad; for they seemed to themselves to have lost their Master, and they knew not what to think, or say, or do. Had they known all, they would have seen that they had every reason to rejoice; but they neither fully understood nor believed the true state of things, and, therefore, they were cast down. And so it often happens that Christians are needlessly distressed because of ignorance and unbelief. In such circumstances, they will do well to converse together. Solitude is apt to sink the soul deeper in melancholy; but the society of those who can sympathize with the disconsolate is directly calculated to impart relief. How encouraging, too, to think that Jesus knows and marks the sadness of his people! "Thou tellest my wanderings," says the Psalmist: "put thou my tears into thy bottle;\* are they not in thy book?" Our Lord did not put this question to the two disciples because he was ignorant, or because they could inform him of anything which he did not know before: "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man;" but he took this method of eliciting their sentiments in a way which would give him the best opening to instruct and comfort them.

*"And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto them, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come*

\* This is an allusion to a custom which prevailed among some nations of collecting the tears shed on the death of a friend in a small phial, which was deposited on his tomb. These phials were called lachrymatories.



*to pass there in these days?"* This question may be understood as accounting for the supposed ignorance of Jesus, on the ground of his being an entire stranger in Jerusalem; and this is the meaning which our version suggests. Or the passage might run thus, "Art thou the only stranger in Jerusalem unacquainted" with these things? and then it would express the surprise of the two disciples at Christ's supposed ignorance of what had happened. The crucifixion of Jesus had made so much noise, and had attracted so much attention, that it was hardly possible, even for a stranger in Jerusalem, to have been ignorant of the event. "Thus, the matter of fact came to be universally known" at the very time; which fact was afterwards fully explained and followed up when the Spirit was poured out in rich abundance. "Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem who know not the death of Christ. What! are they daughters of Jerusalem, and yet so little acquainted with Christ as to ask, What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" \*

"*And he said unto them, What things?"* Still continuing concealed, he asks them about what he himself had too much cause to know; he asks them, with the view of leading them still farther to disburden their minds. On this they proceed at considerable length. "*And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.*" When Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph, the multitude said, "This is Jesus, the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee." † He was said to be of Nazareth, because, after a certain time, that was the usual place of his residence. He was not only a prophet, but the prophet foretold by Moses. He was powerful "in deed," that is, in miracles, and "in word," that is, in the sacred eloquence and efficacy with which he taught; and he was not only much admired by many of the people, but accepted and beloved of God. "*And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.*" To enter into any illustration of these words would be to repeat what we have already considered at great length, and would, therefore, be quite out of place here. It is enough if, while we merely notice these things, we remember the state of mind and the views with which they were adverted to by the two disciples.

\* Henry.

† Matt. xxi. 11.

*"But we trusted,"* continued they, *"that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel."* These two, like the disciples in general, did not yet fully understand the nature of Christ's person, as both God and man, though they regarded him as the prophet—the Messiah; nor did they understand the spiritual nature of his kingdom. They expected him to deliver the Jews from the Roman yoke, and to exalt their nation by external power and conquest. We find, in Acts i. 6, this expectation expressed, or, at least, implied, in the following question, which the disciples, when assembled together at Jerusalem, put to Christ, immediately before his ascension—"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Now that Jesus had been apprehended, condemned, and crucified, the two disciples concluded that he could not redeem Israel according to their sense of the expression; and thus their fond expectations from him were blasted. And yet, this was to mistake the nature of his kingdom, and of the redemption he came to confer. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he. He was not to conquer the Roman armies, and assert the civil government for himself, or for his nation; but he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, to rescue men from the dominion of sin and Satan. The Lord, says the Psalmist, "shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." And here, the very circumstances which were apparently adverse, were quite favourable, nay, necessary, to the glorious result. We can see, at once, how Messiah's death was not only not inconsistent with the redemption of his people, but the grand means of it. We are "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold," "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." Had he not redeemed Israel already? Was not by far the most difficult part of his work of redemption already accomplished? Should not these two disciples rather have said, with Zacharias, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people"? Already that was done which constitutes the burden of the new song, "Thou art worthy," "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." This is a view of things which we can now easily take; but it was not so with the two disciples, at the time here referred to. In their minds were blended darkness and light, faith and unbelief, hope and fear, carnal and spiritual ideas, in a way that we cannot fully compre-

hend, and that nothing but the outpouring of the Spirit could have cleared up.

"*We trusted,*" said they. Let us remember that much false trust is still cherished by many. The trust of some is utterly unfounded, false, and ruinous. Such is the trust of those whose hearts depart from the living God, and trust in man—of those who trust in the pleasures, wealth, or power of this world—of those who trust in their wisdom, righteousness, or strength—of those who trust they will be safe without conversion—and of those who trust in the delusions of formality, or hypocrisy. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." Let us tremble at the very thought of this. But, let us remember that frequently there is also a partial false trust in pious persons—as was the case with these two disciples. Truly gracious persons are sometimes chargeable with some degree of legality, or self-confidence, or unauthorized expectation. We should remember, not merely that God is the only object of trust, but also, that he must be trusted in his own way, and only for that which he has given us reason to expect. We may and should trust that he will order even our temporal affairs in the best way on the whole; but our trust should refer supremely to our spiritual concerns; and we must not confound the grand essentials of religious prosperity with external deliverances and comforts. Our weakness is ready to make us apprehend that all is lost, when things do not turn out exactly as we wish, or expect. Instead of giving way to such distrust, the believer should say, with Job, "Though the Lord slay me, yet will I trust in him." In the words of the Lord by Isaiah, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." While we do not, in any degree, trust for what God has not warranted, let us see that we do indeed trust him firmly for what he does warrant. It will be well if we can say, with Paul,\* "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." Thus our expectation shall not be cut off, but shall be fully realized, and we shall be able to enter into the spirit of the words, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."—"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is

\* 2 Cor. iii. 4.

my strength, and my song; he also is become my salvation."

"*And besides all this,*" added the two disciples, "*to-day is the third day since these things were done.*" In addition to the perplexing circumstance of Christ's crucifixion, they remembered that he had spoken of his rising from the dead on the third day after; and though that day was come, they felt no certainty that any such event had taken place. They confessed, indeed, that certain reports had reached them, but they doubted whether any credit was due to them.

"*Yea, and certain women of our company also made us astonished, who were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. And certain of them who were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not.*" These verses refer to the circumstances connected with our Lord's resurrection, which we considered particularly in the last lecture, and which there is, therefore, no need to stop and examine again. Suffice it to say, that the two disciples, though astonished and agitated by what they had heard, had, on the whole, no faith in the report, and that their hope of Christ's resurrection and of the success of his cause was very low. One might have thought that, from what they had heard, the light of conviction would have flashed on their minds; but they continued in darkness, doubt, and sadness. And now it was that, without making himself known to them, our Lord took the lead in the conversation, and proceeded to expostulate with them, and to clear up their difficulties.

"*Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.*" The word "fools," employed in our version, is too strong. In the passage,\* "*Whosoever shall say (to his brother), Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire,*" the word, in the original, is quite different from the word employed here, and is very contemptuous. The word employed here signifies thoughtless, or inconsiderate persons.† Jesus rebukes the disciples, no doubt, but he rebukes them tenderly and affectionately, and without reproach or sarcasm. It did, certainly, betray a great want of consideration to remain in such ignorance, perplexity, and doubt, when the Old Testament predictions and the recent events so exactly corresponded. We have frequent occasion to observe how slow the disciples, in ge-

\* Matt. v. 22.

† Not *μωροί* but *ἀνοήτοι*.

neral, were to believe in Jesus' Messiahship and resurrection. However unreasonable it was in them to be so backward, yet, their belief has, on that account, the greater weight, when they did at last receive and bear testimony to these truths; for, thus it appears that there was no collusion between Jesus and them, and that they were not led away by weak credulity, but, after waiting for some time, and making full inquiry, found the evidence too powerful to be resisted. Infidels are ready to charge believers in Christianity with weakness and folly; but they themselves are the inconsiderate and foolish, who can remain unconvinced by such evidence. And yet, have we not all reason to plead guilty, more or less, of thoughtlessness, and slowness of heart to believe? This is a sinful state of mind. We ought to be "strong in the faith, giving glory to God." We ought to be "rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith, as we have been taught." He is, as it were, saying to each of us, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Let our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith."—"We believe; help thou our unbelief."

Our Lord added, "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*" Was it not necessary that Messiah should suffer these things, and thus enter into his glory? This was necessary to accomplish the purpose of God, who had determined that so it should be. This was necessary for the glory of God—for the honour of his holiness and justice, as well as of his mercy, in the salvation of sinners—necessary that he might be "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."—"It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."\* His sufferings were necessary for our forgiveness; for, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." And, to prove that his sufferings were necessary to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, it may be enough merely to refer to the 22d Psalm, the 53d chapter of Isaiah, the 9th of Daniel, and the 13th of Zechariah. We are also here reminded that the death of Messiah, and his exaltation, of which his resurrection was the first step, were both equally necessary for all these reasons, and according to the Word of God. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was

\* Heb. ii. 10

buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." The apostle Peter, too,\* gives the same view of the death and exaltation of Messiah, when he says that "the Spirit of Christ," in the prophets, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." What a blessed necessity was this! Let us admire the contrivance and accomplishment of this plan for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Let us, in faith, love, and gratitude, reflect how Christ "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."—"He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him."

Fully to make out the point that it behoved Messiah to suffer that he might reign, Jesus entered into a long account of the Old Testament predictions: "*And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*" What a discourse this must have been! and how natural is it to wish that it had been recorded, and that we had a copy of it! The Holy Spirit has seen meet that it should be otherwise; yet we should be thankful that we have a key to the whole in these words of the evangelist. The Old Testament furnishes at large the subject on which the Saviour spoke, and we should follow it out for ourselves. Here we might dwell on the first promise concerning the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent—on the words of Moses concerning the prophet like himself—on the types and ceremonies, especially the sacrifices of the law—on the various prophecies relating to Christ's genealogy, the time and place of his birth, the life he was to lead, and his death, resurrection, and ascension. In short, it were easy to enlarge indefinitely on this topic, for "the things concerning Christ" are dispersed through the whole of the Old Testament. These passages, as we are here reminded, require to be expounded; and Christ himself and the New Testament are their best expositors. We should, in this study, compare one part with another, proceeding in order through the whole. It is thus that we should search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Christ. May the Holy Ghost, by whom they were inspired, so guide our inquiries, that every veil of ignorance and error may be dispelled. May he enable us so to know the Holy Scriptures, that they may make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

\* 1 Pet. i. 11.

There are several points which might properly be further pressed on your consideration before coming to a close. We shall, however, recall your attention only to one topic, which rests rather on the whole passage than on any particular part of it, and which we first noticed, namely, *the duty of communing together on the things relating to Christ and salvation*. If you are convinced that this is a duty, and desirous to comply with it, the following *rules* may be of some use to assist you in going about it with propriety and mutual edification.

*Do not obtrude religious conversation where it is not likely to do good.* As in other things, so in this, there is sometimes a zeal which is not according to knowledge. The Word of God itself reminds you of the necessity of caution. "There is a time to every purpose under heaven,"—"a time to keep silence," as well as "a time to speak." When Christians are in the society of those who are not only indifferent to religion, but known to be ready to seize on every opportunity of opposing the truth, or to be of such a turn of mind that any attempt would probably tend to exasperate and harden them more and more, then is the time to keep silence—then is the time for remembering our Lord's familiar precept, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." The mixed feelings of restraint, pity, and grief, which, in such circumstances, fill the breasts of the pious, are finely described in these words of the Psalmist: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence: I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred."

*Be ready, however, to embrace every favourable opportunity.* While the practice of some would intimate that, in their opinion, a fit time can hardly ever arrive, we must not imagine that such opportunities are by any means rare. Were we sufficiently attentive, we should find that our intercourse might be turned to advantage in this way in a great variety of instances. A favourable opportunity occurs when an opening is made by another, especially if it come from a quarter whence it was little expected. This passage reminds us that Christians, who are journeying together, should open up their minds to each other on divine things. Visits to the afflicted are peculiarly inviting. While every day of the week may furnish opportunities, the Sabbath

gives an extraordinary call, and affords various facilities to this duty. In plain terms, they are profiting but little, if anything, from attendance on public ordinances on the Lord's-day, whose conversation at home on that day does not evidence a devotional spirit. What shall be said to him who effectually precludes every profitable word, by indulging on that day, if not giddy merriment, at least a continued strain of worldly conversation? "Thou art consulting shame to thy house, and art sinning against thy soul: for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." Let us all study to be more conscientious in this respect, remembering the words of inspiration: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, *nor speaking thine own words*: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

*Choose the most useful subjects.* "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and be filled with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" Yet, how many questions are agitated, which are probably ever to remain matters of uncertain speculation, or which, in whatever way they may be determined, can have no beneficial result! If such subjects are not to be altogether excluded, they, at least, should not be allowed to shut out, or even to encroach much on, those which involve the essence of religion.

*See that your conversation be religious, not only in name, but in reality.* On reflection, you will be sensible that it is quite possible to speak a great deal about religion, without any pious disposition at the time, and thus to draw near to God with the mouth, and honour him with the lips, while the heart is far from him. But that is not as it should be. We do not mean to say that no conversation should be held on religious subjects except by those who are truly religious, for that would be to forbid the bringing forward of those truths by means of which the Spirit of God works on the hearts of the unrenewed. But we are here speaking of those who fear God. Surely they ought to remember that the subjects introduced in what deserves to be called religious conversation, cannot innocently be discussed with



as little feeling as might a question relating to some passing trifle. They should speak and feel as remembering "that this is not a vain thing, but that it is their life."

*Seek the society of the pious.* To enjoy religious conversation in conjunction with prayer, some hold stated meetings; and these, when prudently conducted, are found useful. But, whether any practice of this nature be observed or not, Christians would do well to follow out the general spirit of this rule by frequently availing themselves of each other's company. In such society, the restraint above referred to will be, in a great measure, unnecessary, and they may unbosom themselves in all the confidence of sanctified friendship. Wherever they are, they wish to be faithful and useful; but here they are delighted, and at home. They may be detained for a time among the profane or the worldly, but the consequence is, that they return with double relish to those who are like-minded with themselves. The Psalmist says, "I am a companion, O Lord, of all them that fear thee;" and it is said of Peter and John, that "as soon as they were let go, they went to their own company."

The only other rule we shall mention is this—*Implore divine direction.* It must have occurred to you that it is no easy thing to comply with this duty, zealously to act up to its spirit, and yet to do so with prudence and good effect. What would be well taken and useful from one, would often be offensive and absurd from another. It is frequently very difficult, too, for the same person to determine what is his duty in different circumstances; and, when duty is plain, inclination and courage may be wanting. When you consider all this, you will be sensible of your insufficiency to order your speech aright; and you will remember that both the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord. Hence you will see the propriety of frequently praying that God would keep you from offending with your tongue, and enable you to speak so as to promote his glory and the good of all with whom you may be conversant. You will adopt the petition of the Psalmist: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips"—"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and thy honour all the day." "Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Amen.

## LECTURE CXXXIV.

LUKE XXIV. 28-35.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34. Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."

You will remember the circumstances which we considered in the last lecture, connected with the journey of the two disciples to Emmaus, on the day our Saviour rose from the dead—how, as they were walking along, in sadness, and communing together of what had lately happened, Jesus himself joined their company, while their eyes were restrained that they did not know him—and how, after drawing from them an expression of their hopes and fears, and various anxieties, he gently chid their simplicity and incredulity, and took up and explained the subject at full length. "O fools," said he, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." How pleasantly would the time pass, and how short would the road appear to the two disciples, as they were thus favoured with the society and conversation of one who (though as yet they knew him not) discovered so much light and feeling on the subjects which were nearest their hearts!

Luke goes on to say, "*And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went,*" that is, to Emmaus, where the two

disciples, either usually dwelt, or, at least, intended to lodge for the night. "*And he made as though he would have gone further.*" In this, our Lord manifested civility without dissimulation, and delicacy without stiffness. He did not impose his company on them; he did not turn in without an invitation. Though he knew what was to happen, he seemed to them as intending to proceed farther; and he would have gone on, had they not requested him to stop. It is thus that every modest and well-bred man will act. He will make sure of a welcome before he avail himself of such accommodation at all. He will also take care not unreasonably to presume on that welcome after it has been given, or to prolong his stay to a burdensome length. The wise man says, "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house," or, let thy foot be seldom, make it precious, or scarce, in thy neighbour's house, "lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee." Mutual intercourse, in order to be a mutual comfort, must be conducted with discretion, as well as with cordiality.

"*But they constrained him,*" that is, they pressed or urged him successfully, "*saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.*" They employed as an argument that it was growing late, when proceeding farther might not be agreeable, or safe, and when it was time to rest. "*And he*" yielded to their hearty invitation and opportunity, and "*went in to tarry with them.*" So, Lot said to the two angels, "Behold, now, my lords, turn in I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly, and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast.\*" So also, in the case of the Shunammite and Elisha: "Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who passeth by us continually: let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.†" And so, Luke, speaking, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the kindness of Lydia to Paul, Silas, and himself, says, "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me

\* Gen. xix. 2.

† 2 Kings iv. 8.

to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." From all these examples, Christians should learn to be kind and hospitable, in as far as their circumstances permit; and they are taught that true hospitality consists, not in ostentatious display where there is no love, but, either in kindness to those who need it, for example, to strangers, or, in the moderate, though cheerful, entertaining of acquaintances and friends. In allusion to the example of Abraham and Lot, the apostle Paul says, to the Hebrews, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." On the occasion before us, the two disciples entertained the Lord of angels unawares. The primitive Christians were remarked by the heathen for great hospitality to strangers in general, and especially to Christian strangers. When they travelled, they were accustomed to carry letters of recommendation along with them, which secured them a welcome reception wherever the name of Jesus was known and loved. Paul enjoins bishops, that is, ministers, or overseers of the Church, to be "given to hospitality;" Peter enjoins all believers to "use hospitality one to another, without grudging;" and our Lord assures us that he regards such kindness shown to his people, for his sake, as shown to himself—"He that receiveth you, receiveth me."—"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward:" and, in the great day, he will say to those who act thus from right motives, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in;" for, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

On this part of the conduct of the two disciples we may also remark, that if we have enjoyed communion with Christ, we should, and we will, desire more of it, and feel unwilling to part with him, and anxious to detain him as long as we can. In respect of his spiritual and gracious presence, let us seek to have him in our house and in our heart. And, if we would be successful, we must wrestle with him, like Jacob, who said to him, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me;" and be like these disciples, who constrained him to abide with them. If we do thus earnestly seek communion with him, he will certainly grant it, and vouchsafe more and more of his presence, instruction, and love. Nay, he is anxious to meet us, and to bestow on us the richest

blessings. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

"*And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.*" Though Jesus was now present as a guest, he assumed the office of head of the family, as he had been formerly accustomed to do among his disciples. It is true that some of the actions here mentioned are the same with some which he performed at the institution of the Lord's supper; but it must not be supposed that he now celebrated that holy ordinance. He knew that he was to disappear in the midst of the entertainment, and he would not have done so during a communion service, and have left it unfinished. Indeed, all the circumstances of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving the bread, or cake, were usual with him on other occasions; he did so, for example, on the two occasions on which he miraculously fed multitudes.\* We read of the apostle Paul, also, proceeding in a similar way, before his shipwreck: "He took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and, when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."† If Christ dwell with us, we shall see our bread and all our comforts coming from his hand. He will both provide us with bread, and bless it to our use. In imitation of his example, let us always acknowledge God at our meals. Let our food be received with thanksgiving, and sanctified by the word of God and prayer. When we have eaten and are full, let us bless the Lord our God for the good land which he hath given us.

"*And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.*" The way in which he proceeded may have reminded them of his conduct on similar occasions; but that would not altogether account for their recognition of him; their eyes were at first held, and now the restraint was removed. So, "God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well of water;" so, "The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way;" and so, "When the disciples were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Jesus,"

\* Matt. xiv. 19, xv. 36.

† Acts xxvii. 35.

though they did not know him while he was on board.\* Doubtless, the recognition of him on this occasion filled the two disciples with delightful surprise. It is probable that they were ready to express their joy and reverence; but time was not allowed them, for no sooner did they know him than "he vanished out of their sight:" miraculously, and in a way not particularly explained, he immediately became invisible to them—he disappeared. So, when his enemies at Nazareth were to cast him down headlong from the brow of the hill, he "passed through the midst of them, and went his way." In like manner, when the Jews took up stones to cast at him, "Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed away."† Thus it is that the seasons of satisfactory spiritual communion with Christ are usually short. Scarcely do we see his glory, and realize his gracious presence, when the pleasing sight vanishes. Let us, however, prize such visits when they are made; and let us prepare for the place where the sight of him shall not be interrupted, but where we shall ever be with the Lord.

Christians cannot enjoy communion with their Saviour without being improved by it; and never are they so well qualified for religious fellowship with each other as just after they have been with him. No sooner had their Lord withdrawn than the two disciples gave vent to their feelings, and compared their experience. "*And they said one to another,*" they exclaimed with one consent, "*Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" These words seem to imply that they considered it strange that they did not discover that it was Jesus sooner, seeing they might have known him from the tenor of his discourse, and from the powerful effect it produced on their feelings. While he showed the fulfilment of Scripture in his death and resurrection, their hearts burned, or glowed, with love, joy, gratitude, and admiration. We are here reminded that we should wish our hearts to burn, our souls to be deeply impressed, under the word; and also, that it is the work of Christ thus to touch the heart. For this end, he employs the Holy Scriptures, in which he is still to be considered as speaking to us; and, whatever instrumentality he may employ, it is only he himself who can effectually open them and apply them to us. It is he only who can speak savingly

\* Gen. xxi. 19; Num. xxii. 31; Mark vi. 54. † Luke iv. 30; John viii. 59.

to the heart. When we have any right feeling, it is from the influence of his grace. These are his own words: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Are not the opening and applying of the Scriptures the chief means which Christ still ordinarily employs savingly to impress men's souls? and, when he has been thus addressing and influencing men, may they not, in the recollection of their emotions during such favoured opportunities, adopt the words, in a very important sense, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures?"

Now, in what respects do men's hearts burn within them to whom Christ thus speaks effectually? They do so in respect of their being awakened, and brought to a proper *sense of sin*, and apprehension of the wrath of God—"when his arrows stick fast in them, and his hand presseth them sore"—when they think of God offended, of the Saviour slighted, of the baseness of their transgression, and of their having exposed themselves to the danger of "dwelling with the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings." And then, they burn with an intense *desire for deliverance*, and inquire most anxiously what they must do to be saved—how they may escape from the guilt and power of sin. They burn with desire for an interest in Christ, and the mercy of God. And blessed be the Lord! their state is not hopeless. To the soul thus awakened and looking out for mercy, the seasonable voice is addressed, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."—"Under the display of Christ's fulness, excellency, power, and grace, the sinner, with whom he is talking, looks, and revives—revives, and longs, nay, even grows restless in breathing after him, as being incapable of being satisfied with anything else. Lord, cries such a one, give me Christ, or else I die. Nothing can stand me in stead without him: nothing is worthy to be compared with him: I can easily forsake all for him; and I here agree to do so. Forgive my blindness and ignorance, that could live so long without him, and make so light of him. I now see him to be the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Take from me, or lay upon me what thou pleasest; Christ, and an interest in him, and hope of salvation by him, shall be to me instead of all things."\*

\* Wilcox.

Further, the hearts of believers with whom Christ is holding communion burn with delightful *meditations on his word and person*. "My meditation of him shall be sweet," saith the Psalmist; "I will be glad in the Lord." "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," saith Jeremiah, "and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Their hearts burn, too, with meditations on *the love of Christ*. His love in dying for them brought before their minds, excites in them a flame of love to him in return; and then, the glow of feeling is great, when they think on his personal dignity, his humiliation unto death, the cheerfulness with which he suffered, and the amazing value of the blessings he has purchased and bestows. Believers burn and melt with *contrition*, also, because they are not more devoted to him, and more free from sin; and each of them says, with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Their hearts glow with *joy*, as they are permitted to hold spiritual converse with Christ. "Whom having not seen, they love, and in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Their hearts, at times, burn with meditations on their *troubles and frailty*, meditations which fill their souls, and then vent themselves in some such language as this: "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." Their hearts burn with *zeal* for the glory of God and the good of men. The aspirations of their souls are such as these: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous works. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Lord, save the perishing! "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" When they are favoured with Christ's gracious spiritual presence, they burn with *desire to see him as he is, and to be with him for ever*. Such views and enjoyments produce a desire that they may be perfected and perpetuated—"a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better;" and, to his declaration, "Surely I come quickly," they call forth the hearty response, "Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Here let it also be observed, that where such a glow of



religious feeling is experienced, there will generally be, as in the case of the two disciples, an inclination to express that feeling to others. This expression is natural, edifying, and delightful. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."—"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." In the words of Jeremiah,\* "I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Christians will find such interchange of confidence very pleasant and useful, if they be careful to make it, in proper time and place, with a sincere desire to benefit each other, with a grateful sense of the Lord's goodness, and with due humility, as remembering how unworthy they are of such grace.

Let us all consider whether we have such feelings when listening to the truth of Christ's word. If we are altogether strangers to them, we have no part with him. If we have experienced them in some degree, let us give God the praise, and live to his glory. Let the joy of the Lord be our strength. Let us beware lest our affections become cold. Let us not be of the stony-ground hearers, who, when they hear the word, anon with joy receive it, but having no root of grace in themselves, endure only for a short season. We have too much reason to lament the transitory nature of our best feelings; but let us endeavour to preserve them by watching against sin within, and the world without. Nay, let us study to cherish and improve such feelings by the use of scriptural means. Let us be as much in Christ's company as we can, while we are here; and let us often think of the glow of affection with which we shall love him hereafter.

There is still another idea suggested by this verse, which (though we have already hinted at it) deserves our more careful attention, and it is this—If we really wish that our hearts should burn within us, that we should have a glow of pious feeling, in listening to the opening up of the Scriptures, we must take care not to mistake the source of such experience. We are too ready to depend on particular persons, and adventitious and outward circumstances. One is ready to say, "Had it been a certain other preacher, I would not have been so dull." Another, "Had it been a deep doc-

\* Jer xx. 9.

trinal discussion, I would have been fixed and benefited." Another, "Had it been a sermon on salvation by grace, I would have been moved." Another, "Had it been a moral duty that was taught, some practical good would have been done." Another, "Had the promises been brought forward, I would have been encouraged; or the threatenings, I would have been awakened." And still another, "Had the preacher displayed more skill in composition, more animation in delivery, more grace of speech, more strength of argument, more affection, surely I would have been pleased, and permanently impressed." Now, however proper it may be to study to have even the mere adjuncts of the truth of an attractive nature, expectations founded on circumstances such as these are utterly groundless. Thus it is that multitudes, Sabbath after Sabbath, wait on the preaching of the word, without real, permanent, spiritual benefit; because, however they may be amused at times, they look to men and to circumstances, and do not fix their expectation of enjoyment and profit on the presence and blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Alas! though the matter were ever so admirable, and the manner ever so engaging, though every thing were exactly to their mind, if Christ himself be not there in his gracious influences, if he be not chiefly looked to, the admired preacher will be no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Ask yourselves, then, for what it is that you come out to church. Is it to see, and to be seen? Is it to hear the voice of a mortal man? Is it to admire figures of speech, or even a display of orthodoxy and zeal? Then you may as well go out to the wilderness, to see a reed shaken with the wind. Let the language of your souls be, "Sir, we would see Jesus"—"Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear." Seek to hear Christ's voice addressing you from the Scriptures; and you may then expect that your hearts will burn within you, and that his word will prove like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.

Verse 33: *And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.*" If these two entertained any thought of forsaking the company of the rest of the disciples, and the scene of our Lord's sufferings, that thought now vanished, their faith was re-assured, and they retraced their steps. Besides, having seen Jesus, and being delighted with the discovery, they could not rest till they had carried

the good news to their brethren. Evening as it was, they instantly arose, and set out for the city. It is a branch of the comprehensive duty of charity, or benevolence, to communicate good news to those whom they concern; and, in particular, to make known whatever is favourable to the cause of Christ. When the Syrians had fled in the twilight from before the walls of Samaria, which they had been besieging, the two lepers, who discovered their flight, said one to another, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; now therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household."\* When the two disciples came to Jerusalem, they found "the eleven gathered together," that is, the apostles, though, strictly speaking, there were only ten apostles present, Judas being dead, and Thomas being absent.† There were also present with these apostles, other disciples, who had met, it is to be supposed, to consult, and to compare the various things they had seen and heard at this interesting period.

They found the apostles and these disciples "*saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*" The two disciples had come to give information, but they were anticipated by some of the meeting calling out to them, as soon as they entered, that Jesus had actually risen from the dead, and had appeared to the apostle Peter. We have no particular account of this appearance of our Lord to Peter. We are merely told here that he did appear to him; and in 1 Cor. xv. 5, we read that "he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." His appearing to Peter, before he appeared to the other apostles, was, probably, with the kind intention of showing that he had forgiven him the crime of denying him, and had restored him to favour. On this occasion, Peter, who was generally forward to speak, allowed others to speak for him. There is an apparent inconsistency between what is said in Mark xvi. 13, "They," that is, the two disciples, "went and told it unto the residue, neither believed they them," and what is said here, by Luke, of their exclaiming, "The Lord is risen indeed." But both evangelists are to be understood as speaking only, in a general way, of several of the disciples, and neither of them absolutely of every individual. The fact was that some of them believed the resurrection of Christ at this time, and some believed not. Matthew‡ mentions that when the

\* 2 Kings vii. 9.

† John xx. 24.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 17.

eleven saw Jesus afterwards on a mountain in Galilee, "they worshipped him; but some doubted."

As soon as the two disciples had an opportunity, or, as we say, could get in their word, they corroborated the good news of the Saviour's resurrection. "*They told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*" They went over all the particular circumstances of their intercourse with him, which, as we have already considered, we need not now repeat.

The conduct of the disciples at this time, on both sides, furnishes us with an edifying example. Thus to compare experiences and views—to enter into mutual explanations and interchange of sentiments, tends to correct mistakes, to increase knowledge, to strengthen faith, to enliven joy, and to quicken obedience. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," said our Lord to Peter. "Come," says the Psalmist, "and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."—"Verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." Lord, grant that we may often have such experience and such intercourse, and, in particular, that we may have reason to speak with gratitude of the Redeemer's goodness in making himself known to us in the breaking of bread at his holy table—an ordinance to which these words (though they do not originally refer to it) may be very naturally accommodated. Such sincerely pious intercourse will, at once, be most edifying and refreshing to ourselves, and secure the approving notice, and be a pledge of the everlasting love, of our God and Saviour. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

## LECTURE CXXXV.

## LUKE XXIV. 36-49.

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them. 44. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, 46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48. And ye are witnesses of these things, 49. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

THE preceding context informed us how our Lord met and talked with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus—how he discovered himself to them as he sat at meat with them in the house, and then disappeared—how, being anxious to make known what they had witnessed, they immediately returned to Jerusalem, where they found the apostles and other believers met together—how some of them informed the two disciples that Jesus was indeed risen, and had appeared to Peter—and how they, in their turn, told the meeting what had happened to them on the way, and how Christ was known of them in the breaking of bread. In immediate connection with this, Luke goes on to say—

“*And, as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*” The account in John xx. 19, is as follows: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors

were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." This took place in the evening of the day on which he rose so early from the dead. As the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, that seems to imply that they were fastened inside, notwithstanding which, Jesus miraculously opened the door, and entered. We read that the iron gate of the prison opened to the angel and Peter, of its own accord.\* Jesus, on this occasion, addressed his usual salutation to his disciples, wishing them comfort, safety, prosperity, and every temporal and spiritual blessing. When he used these words, he used them, not as a mere form, or empty compliment, but as a solemn prayer, nay, an authoritative benediction. When he thus spoke peace, he actually gave peace. This was peculiarly kind towards the disciples, who had so lately forsaken him and fled. His standing in the midst of the disciples at this time may justly be considered as an encouragement to us to expect his gracious presence in the meetings of his people. It may also be hence inferred that Christians should not entirely forsake the assembling of themselves together in times of trouble and danger, and yet, in such circumstances, should employ all prudent precautions for their safety. Besides, as this was on the first day of the week, we have here an encouraging example to us of the observance of the Lord's-day. Though not on that day only, yet on that day eminently, may the fulfilment of Christ's gracious declaration be expected: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We are here taught, also, to desire and expect the peace and the blessing of the Saviour—to seek that the peace of God that passeth all understanding may keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. May he speak peace to our souls, so that we may not return to folly!

*"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."* There is something very alarming to mortals in the idea of any person appearing after death, or of any visitor coming from the other world. Is not this a proof of the fallen condition of man, fear being the companion of guilt? And is it not a proof of a bad state of the conscience, or, at least, of much sinful imperfection? for, why should we be afraid, with any perturbation, even

\* Acts xii. 10.

of bad spirits, as they are under divine restraint? and, as for holy angels, and the departed spirits of the just, they can have no desire to hurt us. Yet, so it has generally been, that men, and even pious men, have been discomposed and terrified by such appearances. Gideon, Manoah, the shepherds of Bethlehem, Cornelius, and others, were sore afraid when they had angelic visions. Eliphaz thus describes his vision and his attendant feelings: "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof." The apostles would now remember that the doors were shut, and that Jesus had been put to death and laid in the tomb; and, forgetting the many displays he had given of his power, and the predictions of his resurrection, they had not the presence of mind to form the right conclusion, but imagined they beheld some spectre or phantom, some spirit assuming his appearance, while he was still dead. They considered this to be a mere apparition or ghost—though, indeed, it is difficult to define in words that which is not definite in idea. When Peter, after his miraculous deliverance from prison, stood knocking at the gate of the house to which he went, they said to Rhoda, who told them that it was Peter, "Thou art mad;" and when she insisted on it that it was even so, they said, "It is his angel." So, also, "when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." Let us commit the keeping of our bodies and souls, in well-doing, into the hands of our faithful Creator, and we shall have nothing to fear.

*"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"* He knew their inmost thoughts and reasonings, and he asked them why perplexing doubts and suspicions filled their minds, as if it were not really he. In like manner, on the occasion just referred to, when the disciples were so troubled as to cry out for fear, "Jesus straightway spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid." The ungodly have just cause to fear: the wicked "flee when no man pursueth;" but it becomes the righteous to be "bold as a lion." Believers, however, are often troubled by their own fancy, and especially by mistakes about Christ. The disciples thought they saw a spirit, when they saw Jesus himself: so some of

his people are still perplexed by distrust, when they should feel safe and happy.

*"Behold,"* added Jesus, *"my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet."* As their weak hearts suggested that it was only an apparition, and as they were not yet convinced of his resurrection, he condescended to employ reasonings with them, founded on an appeal to their senses. He invited them to look narrowly, and to observe, not only that he had a real body, but also that certain parts of it were marked according to what he had undergone when he was fastened to the cross by nails driven through his hands and feet, and when the spear was thrust into his side. John\* says, Jesus "showed them his hands and his side." Nay, he invited them to feel, to handle him, that they might have the evidence of the sense of touch. He still retained, it appears, the marks of crucifixion. So John "beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb, as it had been slain."†

Here it is proper to notice the case of Thomas, who was absent on this occasion, and how his unreasonable demand was complied with. Eight days after, Jesus appeared again to the disciples, when Thomas was present, and after his gracious salutation, said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord, and my God." Memorable and instructive to us are the words which Jesus then spoke: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." May that blessedness be ours! Surely we have abundant evidence from testimony. Christ, though we have not seen him, may we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, may we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

This part of our Lord's history is justly considered as furnishing one of the most plain refutations (though it may well seem strange that any refutation should be necessary) of the heresy which early prevailed among the Manichees and Valentinians, that the Saviour never had a real body, but merely assumed a human appearance. It seems to have

\* John xx. 20.

† Rev. v. 6.



been to this part of our Lord's history, too, that John alluded in the opening of his first epistle; and it is not unlikely that he had some allusion to the incipient heresy just noticed when he wrote: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life," "declare we unto you."

From the whole of this appeal by our Lord to his apostles, we infer, that it is equally according to Scripture and reason to hold that no greater proof of a miracle can be given than the testimony of the senses. It is altogether unreasonable to call on men to believe what is contrary to the senses; and Scripture nowhere calls on us to do so, but quite the reverse. Men must believe what their senses testify; and it would be altogether preposterous for a man to affirm that anything is so and so, when his senses declare it to be otherwise. This proves the utter absurdity and falsehood of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Again, our Lord's way of speaking here is a proof of the immateriality of the soul, and of the existence of disembodied spirits. When the disciples supposed they saw a mere spirit, he did not say that there was no such thing, but he spoke on the supposition that there was—that there was spirit, as distinguished from body; and he only showed that they were mistaken in this case. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." The properties of body and spirit are totally different. The one is visible, the other is invisible. The one is compounded and divisible, the other is simple and indivisible. The one is capable of thought, the other is not. Hence, reason infers that, being different in their properties, they are different in themselves. Scripture declares them to be different in their origin, the one being of the dust of the ground, and the other of the inspiration of the Almighty. The bearing of such passages as the following on this point is quite plain:—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—"Into thy hands I commend my spirit."—"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."—"At home in the body, and absent from the Lord,"—"absent from the body, and present with the Lord." In all these expressions the soul is represented as the inhabitant, and the body as the house. This is important, not only philosophically, but religiously; for the whole scriptural system proceeds on this principle.

Verse 41: "*And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered.*" "They believed not." This does not mean that they altogether discredited what they saw; for, if it had been so, they would not have been affected with joy and wonder. This was the partial unbelief of true disciples. The sight and examination of Christ's body had evidently made a great impression on them; yet they were not fully convinced, but they still suspected that there might be some illusion. Now, though they were, doubtless, in some degree, culpable here, their slowness of heart to believe, their not coming hastily to a conclusion, but being gradually brought to it by various steps, and by many irresistible proofs, strongly corroborates to us the truth of our Lord's resurrection. The reason assigned for their not yet being fully satisfied is very noticeable: "They believed not for joy, and wondered." So delightful to them was the very idea of their Lord's resurrection, that they lost composure of mind and coolness of reflection, and could scarcely believe their own senses. So men sometimes exclaim, in ecstasy, "Is this possible? Can it be so? Surely there is some mistake here. These are too good news to be true." In illustration of this, we may notice the feelings of Jacob, when he heard of Joseph's safety and prosperity, whom he had long given up for lost: "They told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." The circumstantial account, however, at last convinced him: "His spirit revived, and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."\* Another illustration of this is found in Job ix. 16: "If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice." Job was then so distressed and perplexed, that even an answer in peace would not have entirely and immediately re-established his faith and hope. So, in the 126th Psalm, the Jews say, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." Their restoration was so rapid and wonderful, that it was more like a dream than a reality. In like manner, the disciples could hardly believe what they now saw, they were so filled with delightful astonishment. They would not hastily admit the truth of an event of so amazing importance. They erred, indeed, not on the side of credulity, but on the side of incredulity. Yet, however deficient, they

\* Gen. xlv. 26.]

were true Christians; and their risen Lord had actually appeared to them, and spoken peace to them. Now, this suggests one of the causes whence some truly pious persons have so little joy and confidence, namely, the immensity of the interest in question, occasioning an anxiety so deep, and an agitation so strong, that they are unable, at the time, to reason coolly on the subject, and can hardly believe that God is so gracious as he really is. Deliverance from eternal misery, and obtaining eternal happiness, constitute an object so awfully important, that it seems as if the apprehension of the mere possibility of a failure were sufficient to overbalance an ordinary hope. Men are easily persuaded of a trifle, especially if it do not much concern themselves; but they require more to satisfy them in a weighty business of personal concern. To this difficulty we have to oppose the matchless grace of Jehovah, his promise and his oath, and the consideration that he has already given them the greatest possible proof of his love. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It becomes us, therefore, to be "strong in the faith, giving glory to God."

"And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, *he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?*" He adopted still another way of removing their remaining uncertainty. "*And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. And he took it, and did eat before them.*" Hence it would appear that ordinary food may consist with a risen body, though not necessary to it. As for this particular action, it was an incontestable proof that Christ was present bodily, and that it was no spectre that the disciples saw.\* This was afterwards referred to, by the apostle Peter, as an evidence of our Lord's resurrection.† "Him God raised up the third day and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." What these disciples saw they testified, and we should believe, their testimony being unexceptionable, and perfectly sufficient. To those who knew him before, "he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs."

Our blessed Lord, having now entirely removed the doubts of his disciples, proceeded to address them, and to instruct them, by recalling to their remembrance what he had for-

\* See also John xxi. 5-13.

† Acts x. 41.

merly taught them out of the Old Testament: "*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.*" That he distinctly told them that he was to be put to death, and to rise again, as predicted in the Old Testament, one quotation from the 18th chapter of this Gospel will be sufficient to show: "Then he took unto him the twelve, and began to say unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again." To enter particularly on these things here, either from prophecy or history, would only be to repeat what has been said in former lectures. The division of the Old Testament into the three great parts here mentioned is made by Josephus,\* and was common with the Jews: and with regard to this division, it is only necessary to observe that the Psalms represented, not only the book strictly so called, but all the books not included either in the Pentateuch or in the Prophets, which books are sometimes called the Hagiography. It would be very convincing and edifying for the disciples to have these sayings thus brought to their remembrance, when they were fulfilled. So, we shall do well to reflect on what we have heard and read, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

The Lord Jesus was careful to refresh the memory, and more fully to inform the minds, of the disciples; but something more was necessary to bring them to a practical, experimental, and saving knowledge of the truth, and this he graciously bestowed: "*Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.*" In the 32d verse, it is said that he "opened to them the Scriptures;" but here it is said that "he opened their understanding." This action was a proof of his Godhead; for, it is only God who has the hearts of men in his hand, and can work on the mind itself. Others may open the Scriptures, but he only can open the understanding. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and

\* Josephus, Against Apion, l. 8.

no man openeth." The Jewish prepossessions of the disciples prevented them, in some measure, from seeing the spiritual nature of the gospel, and the application of the prophecies to Jesus; but now these prejudices were dissipated, and the veil which was on their hearts was taken away. The word, too, is intensive, or very strong in signification; he "opened," that is, he thoroughly opened,\* their understanding. Their understanding was not altogether shut before—it was partially opened; but now it was thrown wide open, and a flood of light entered.

Let us carefully mark, and personally improve, the views here given. Let us remember the important place occupied by the Holy Scriptures, and seek our religious knowledge from them. Let us study them well, that we may become acquainted with their contents, especially, with what they teach concerning Christ. If we be not diligent in this study, we can have no good reason to expect that we shall attain to the saving knowledge of the truth. At the same time, let us remember that this searching of the Scriptures is not enough, but that there is a necessity for the special teaching of Christ by his Holy Spirit. Without this, we may hear and see, but we can never "understand" or "perceive." "Wisdom's words are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge;" but, to others, they are unintelligible, and uninteresting. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence, the prophetic office of Christ includes, not only external instruction, but also internal illumination. He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." But Jesus removes the veil of prejudice, the love of sin, and the delusions of Satan. Through the instrumentality of his Word, and by the influence of his grace, he "opens men's eyes, and turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in him." Of this we have a striking example in the case of Lydia,

\* *Ἀνοίγειν.*

“ whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” Let us, then, remember this, and cultivate a spirit of prayer and dependence on divine teaching. Let us say, with the Psalmist, “ Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes ”—“ Open mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.” Follow this plan, you who have no spiritual understanding, and you shall attain to the knowledge of the Lord. Many things which entirely escaped your observation before will be dwelt on by you with pleasure; and many things which you fancied you knew quite well before, will appear to you in a new light, and with new beauty. The truth, which is ever the same in itself, will affect you very differently. You will be shocked at your former indifference, and surprised that you did not always feel as you ought. Follow this plan, too, you who have some right understanding of the things of Christ. He could, if he chose, give his people the perfection of knowledge at once; but he prefers communicating knowledge by degrees. It is here, as in the natural world, “ The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” They grow in grace and in knowledge. As scholars of limited capacity, the Holy Spirit goes on to guide them more and more into all truth.

While our Lord was opening the understanding of the disciples, he still continued to open the Scriptures to them; for, he “ *said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer?* ”—he quoted passages, to show that this was predicted, and he proved that it was necessary to satisfy the law and justice of God, in order to the salvation of sinners. As the apostle writes to the Hebrews, “ It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” He showed, also, how it behoved Christ “ *to rise from the dead the third day.* ” This was necessary to fulfil the prophecies in the 16th Psalm, and in the type of Jonas—to prove the acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice—and to be a pattern and pledge of the happy and glorious resurrection of all his followers. These things we can now see clearly; and we should often recur to them as fundamental and edifying truths.

Our Lord had also taught, in substance, before, and he now expressly said, “ *that repentance and remission of sins*

*should be preached in his name.*" He came to call sinners to repentance; and now that his bodily presence was to be withdrawn from the earth, he committed to the apostles the work of preaching the great doctrines of repentance, or a change of mind, and remission, or the forgiveness of sins. He directed that salvation, or deliverance from the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, should be preached in his name; that is, by his authority, on the ground of his righteousness, and in connexion with faith in him. And this he ordered to be preached "*among all nations.*" The offer was not to be limited to the Jews; it was to be extended to the Gentiles. According to Matthew, Christ said, "Go and teach all nations." This, too, was what was foretold in the Old Testament. "It is a light thing," said the Lord, "that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." This direction was attended to by the apostles. The great leading topics of their preaching were what our Lord here pointed out. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And, at another time,\* the same apostle said for himself and the other apostles, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Paul also taught, "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."† Already many of the Gentiles have had the word preached to them: and, at last, it shall be published to every nation under heaven. How thankful should we be that it has been proclaimed to our nation! and how careful to receive it, and to turn to the Lord in repentance and faith! Let us also seek that the gospel may be universally diffused—that men may be blessed in Christ, and all nations call him blessed.

But, the order in which our Lord directed his apostles to proceed is very noticeable: "*Beginning at Jerusalem.*" He said that he himself "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and his personal ministry was almost confined to them. When he first sent out the apostles, he said to them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather

\* Acts v. 31

† Acts xx. 21.

to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He now directed them to begin with the Jews, though not to end with them; and his direction was carefully attended to. "Unto you *first*," said Peter to the Jews, "God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."\* Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." In like manner, Paul "showed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God."† This was, no doubt, the natural order; but what particularly demands our notice is the amazing grace and compassion our Lord manifested in directing the blessings of salvation to be offered first at the place where, and to the people by whom, he was crucified. It might have been apprehended that he would have given a very different charge, and that he would have said, "Let salvation through my name be preached everywhere else, but not at Jerusalem—not at the city whose inhabitants slew so many of the prophets, have slain my forerunner, and have slain me, and will soon slay the most of you. Go not near them. Enter not within their gates: I have preached to them myself, but they would not listen. I have wrought many miracles before their eyes, but they were not convinced: I have shed my blood for them, but they still hate me. I charge you to preach to all the other nations of the world, but not at Jerusalem." This would have only been what they deserved; but the compassionate Redeemer directed that they should not only have the offer of salvation, but have the first offer. He commanded that they should be informed without delay, that, though they had rejected, scorned, and crucified him, he was willing and anxious to save them still, and that they would find in his blood, which they had shed, a sufficient atonement, even for the sin of shedding it. Surely, after this, no sinner of any age, or country, need despair of forgiveness, if he will only repent and believe the gospel.

Jesus added, "*And ye are witnesses of these things.*" The apostles were witnesses of the circumstances of Christ's

\* Acts iii. 26.

† Acts xiii. 46, xxvi. 20.



ministry, and miracles, and life, and death, and resurrection, and what passed after his resurrection, and of his having declared his readiness to give pardon, peace, and eternal salvation to the penitent and believing. While the disciples, in general, could bear witness to many of these things, the apostles, in particular, could bear witness to them all; nay, they were especially fixed on by Christ for that purpose, and they looked on themselves as set apart to speak and act as witnesses. Thus, Peter said,\* "We are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree, him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness that, through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." These things they testified by their preaching, by solemn evidence given before rulers, and, in many cases, by their sufferings as martyrs. Their testimony is handed down to us in authentic writings: let us rely on it, and we shall receive the blessings to which it refers.

Having noticed the chief practical lessons in passing along, we have only, in concluding, to notice what is contained in the 49th verse. Though the apostles were solemnly constituted witnesses for Christ, and ordained to bear testimony for him by the public preaching of his word, he did not wish them to proceed in that work forthwith, but he said to them, "*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*" In this, he referred to the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit. They had already obtained his influences in some measure, but they were to receive them in far greater measure in a short time. On a previous occasion† Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for, the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." This gift was called "The promise of the Father," because it had been expressly promised by God

\* Acts x. 39.

† John vii. 38.

before, as in Joel: "It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." The same promise was, in substance, repeatedly made by Christ; and it may be considered as the chief promise remaining to be fulfilled after the coming of the Saviour. This was to impart to the apostles great power and clear illumination, and the gifts of miracles and of teaching, so as to qualify them fully for their ministerial office. Accordingly, they did wait quietly at Jerusalem, as is stated in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where this direction and promise are more fully described: "Being assembled together with them, Jesus commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And, after the account of his ascension, it is said, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet;" and "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication in the temple." Ten days after our Lord's ascension, that is, on the day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled in the extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, as related in the 2d chapter of the Acts; and that event is declared to have been the fulfilment of the prophecy already quoted from Joel. After this, the exertions of the apostles were most vigorous, and the success of the gospel was very rapid and very great.

We still reap, or should reap, benefit from these miraculous gifts, which were intended to confirm men's faith, and stir them up to obey the truth to the latest generations. We shall be without excuse if we resist this evidence. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost?" And, though miraculous gifts have ceased, and are no longer to be expected, yet all the ordinary gifts which are necessary to salvation are ready to be bestowed on us. Jesus promised to send another Comforter, to abide with his people for ever, even the Spirit of truth. Let us earnestly entreat, and readily yield to his

enlightening, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting, and sealing influences. Thus shall we, in the most important, that is, the saving sense of the words, be "endued with power from on high." God will "grant unto us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

## LECTURE CXXXVI.

LUKE XXIV. 50-53.

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."

PERFECT happiness is not to be obtained here below. Every one's life is chequered; it is strewed with roses and with thorns: "Though a man live many days, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Nor, in this respect, was the Son of God unlike his brethren. "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but" one who "was in all points tried like as we are, yet without sin." In his life, indeed, suffering greatly preponderated. "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Although, however, the greater part of his history consists of the relation of his lowliness and sorrow, there are some parts of it which exhibit him in the glory and happiness of his illustrious person and character. The wonderful circumstances attending his conception and birth clearly demonstrated his divine dignity and heavenly descent. So, also, his transfiguration on the mount for a time removed the gloom that hung around him, and filled with delightful astonishment his three highly favoured disciples. After this, we contemplate him passing through a most mournful scene of ignominy, pain, and death. His triumph was indeed begun in his resurrection, when he burst the bands of death, and rose victorious over the grave; but it was completed in his glorious ascension, and sitting down at his Father's right hand. This is, at once, a most useful and most delightful subject of contemplation. Though we saw him despised, rejected, and crucified, we now view him in all his glory. Although the greater part of his stay in this world was dark and dismal, yet, when he leaves it, his

divine splendour shines forth to dazzle our eyes. Thus we have sometimes seen the natural sun in the firmament enveloped in misty vapours, and veiled, for the greater part of the day, in clouds and rain, but at last, towards the evening, dispel them all, and ride down the western sky in his native, unclouded majesty.

To assist our meditations on this subject, let us, in dependence on the divine blessing, consider the circumstances of our Lord's ascension, its ends, and the practical effects it should have on us. Let us consider,

I. The *circumstances* of our Lord's ascension. And, under this head, let us notice,

1. The *time* of his ascension. It took place forty days after his resurrection. It was not till after he had appeared frequently to his disciples, and conversed with them freely, that he was taken up into heaven. According to Luke's words, at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, "Jesus was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost" (that is, by the influence and assistance of the Holy Ghost, with which he was so richly furnished) had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen; to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Though our Lord left the full instruction of his disciples to the Holy Spirit, whose influences were soon to be poured out on them miraculously, he embraced every opportunity of teaching them while he remained personally on earth. Several very interesting instructions delivered by him, and circumstances which occurred in his history during this period, are related in this chapter. But there were many other important things connected with the same period which are not described by Luke. Among these may be mentioned, the incredulity of Thomas—our Lord's journey into Galilee, and his appearance to the disciples there—his showing himself to them at the sea of Tiberias—the question and charge he addressed to Peter, and his foretelling that apostle's martyrdom—what he said of the apostle John—his institution of Christian baptism—and his instructions to the apostles, when he commanded them to preach the gospel to every creature, and promised to be with his servants always, even to the end of the world.\* Thus, he tarried with them forty days, to convince them of his resurrection, to instruct them in the

\* Matt. xxviii. 18 to end; John xx. and xxi.

knowledge of the truth, and to encourage them to steadfastness in the cause of the gospel. The next circumstance to be considered is,

2. The *place* of his ascension. "And he led them out," says Luke, "*as far as to Bethany.*" The town of Bethany was the residence of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, whom Jesus loved. It was frequently resorted to by our Lord, and was only fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem. It was not, strictly speaking, from the village itself, however, but from the Mount of Olives, in its vicinity, that he ascended. This appears from Acts i. 12, where, after the account of his ascension, the place of which is not there mentioned before, it is immediately added, "Then returned they" (the disciples) "unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey." A Sabbath-day's journey, according to Josephus, was seven furlongs and a half, or nearly a mile, eight furlongs being a mile. The same author says that Mount Olivet was but five furlongs from the city, referring, of course, to the nearest part of the mountain. We are told, (in John xi. 18) that Bethany, that is, the town of Bethany, was about fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, from Jerusalem. But some say that Bethany was a tract, or region, of Mount Olivet, as well as a town, the other region in the way being called Bethphage, and that all these apparent difficulties are reconciled when this is kept in view, and on the supposition that Jesus ascended from that part of the mount where these two tracts met, which spot, being more remote from Jerusalem than the nearest part of the mountain, but not so remote as the village of Bethany, is here said to have been a Sabbath-day's journey, or nearly a mile off. It appears from this phrase, which intimated that the Jews did not consider themselves at liberty to travel farther on the Sabbath, that, with their usual minuteness, they limited themselves where God had not limited them. There is much to imitate, however, in this regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath. We ought not to travel farther on that day than what is required to bring us to the place of public worship, or called for by considerations of necessity and mercy;\* and the same rule is applicable to working, as well as to travelling. Our Lord, then, ascended from that part of the Mount of Olives called Bethany.

There is something very magnificent, and very interesting,

\* See 2 Kings iv. 23.

in mountains. They afford an extensive and commanding prospect of the surrounding country. They tend to awaken in the mind thoughts of the Creator's power and glory. As their tops ascend to heaven, thither should our meditations and hearts also aspire. On them, too, there are generally an awful solitude and stillness, in which the soul forgets all worldly objects, and is elevated to heavenly contemplations. In short, were we left to fix on places where, rather than elsewhere, divine appearances should take place, we should fix on mountains. Accordingly, many of the most remarkable occurrences and divine appearances are recorded, in Scripture, as having taken place in such situations. It was on a mountain in the land of Moriah that Abraham, in intention, offered up his son Isaac. The law of Moses was given from Mount Sinai. On a mountain, our Lord preached the long and excellent sermon which takes its name from that circumstance. It is supposed that he was transfigured on Mount Tabor: we have seen that he was crucified on Mount Calvary, and now we find that he ascended from Mount Olivet, or the Mount of Olives. This was a place to which he frequently resorted for secret prayer. After the Lord's supper, and the singing of the hymn, he and his disciples "went out to the Mount of Olives." Towards the foot of this mountain, too, lay the garden of Gethsemane, the place of his agony.\* Thus it is, that the place of private prayer is often the place of highest privilege. Nor is it improbable that Jesus honoured Mount Olivet to be the place of his ascension, in order to intimate to his followers that suffering leads to glory, and that it is through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God. So also, the bed of sickness, though the believer may endure much agony there, is generally the spot whence his soul, released from trouble, ascends to the joys of heaven.

3. The ascension of Christ took place in the presence of numerous *witnesses*. There was no necessity for any persons being present when our Lord rose from the dead, because his appearing after his resurrection to those who knew him before his crucifixion was a sufficient proof of his resurrection. But, as he could not be seen in heaven by his followers till they arrived there themselves, it seems to have been absolutely necessary to command belief that there should be eye-witnesses of his ascension. Accordingly,

\* Mark xiv. 26-32; Luke xxii. 39.

it was so ordered, by divine wisdom, that there should be abundant evidence of this kind. It might, indeed, be said that Jesus chose too retired a place for ascending, and that it would have been better had he ascended from some very public place in the sight of a vast multitude of the unbelieving Jews, as, had they seen him so enter into heaven, they would surely have been convinced that he came down from heaven. But, as they had obstinately resisted all the other evidences of his divine mission, it was but just in him to deny them this last evidence. Nor is there any reason to suppose that though this evidence had been granted, it would have made any impression on them, as the miracles they had already witnessed were very numerous, and many of them as astonishing. When they were so perverse as to say that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, they might as well have said that he ascended into the sky by magic, or by his connection with "the prince of the power of the air." This miracle, like his other miracles, would in all probability have been lost on them. Therefore, he would not indulge them with this sight, which would have been to them only a vain entertainment. He took care, however, that there should be a very satisfactory number of witnesses. He retired with his disciples, and, in their sight, was carried up into heaven. "*He led them out,*" says Luke, "as far as to Bethany." He evidently took the eleven apostles with him: he may have taken other disciples, but the apostles, at least, were with him. The number of witnesses, then, was even more than was absolutely necessary; for at the mouth of two or three witnesses facts are considered as sufficiently established. In this case, too, as well as in the case of the resurrection of Christ, it was better to have a select and definite number of witnesses to be referred to, than it would have been to have left the proof at random to a far greater number, not particularized. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us," said Peter,\* "who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." The same persons bore testimony both to his resurrection and ascension; to that testimony they adhered under every per-

\* Acts x. 40.



secution, and that testimony they sealed with their blood. Thus, this glorious event is transmitted to us with all the evidence that it admits of. Let us bless God who has given us so solid proof whereon to rest our belief.

4. Another circumstance of which we are informed is that this event took place while our Lord was employed in *blessing* the disciples. "*And he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*" The lifting up of the hands was the usual expressive attitude of benediction. So, we read of Aaron, the high priest, lifting up his hand towards the people, and blessing them.\* This was our Redeemer's last action on earth, and, as such, deserves our careful consideration. It was an action most worthy of the benignity of his nature—worthy of him who came into the world, and lived, and died, to confer the richest blessings on men—worthy of him in whom men were to be blessed, and whom all nations were to call blessed. By this action, he showed the strength and the duration of his affection for his disciples. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end," to the last moment of his tabernacling on earth. We are not informed what words he employed, though, no doubt, they would be very beautiful, and very appropriate. And the words he now used were not a mere benevolent wish, a mere praying for a blessing on them; but they were accompanied with divine power to impart a sense of the blessing pronounced. This was an act of authority, by which the blessing was actually conferred: and the minds of the disciples would glow with holy joy when they received his parting benediction. But he is still ready to bless us—to bless us with light, and pardon, and peace, and sanctification. "The Lord bless us, and keep us—the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us—the Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace!" In this last act of Christ's on earth, a beautiful example is shown of what ought to be the conduct of departing believers. When they have reason to think that they are about to leave the world, they should, if circumstances permit, take an opportunity of leaving with their connections and friends their parting counsel and blessing. They should speak to them of the things pertaining to salvation, and bear their dying testimony to the truth. Nothing can be more suitable than

\* Lev. ix. 22.

that they who hope they are soon to ascend to heaven, should speak of it to those whom they are to leave behind, and whom they earnestly wish at one time to follow them thither. So died Moses, and Joshua, and Jacob, and so many Christians have been enabled to employ their last moments, and have breathed out their souls in blessing their families and friends, and ascribing praises to their Redeemer.

5. We are told, in Acts i. 9, that "*a cloud received him out of their sight.*" Clouds are frequently mentioned in Scripture, as a medium through which the Lord in some degree manifested himself to men. In "a pillar of cloud by day" the Lord directed his ancient Israel. "The glory of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days, and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the cloud." \* "As Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the door of the tabernacle; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent-door." At the dedication of Solomon's temple, "the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for, the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." † At our Lord's transfiguration, "a bright cloud overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud; and there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." ‡ And now, at his ascension, a cloud received him out of their sight. In the cloud there are both concealment and manifestation. The divine glory is so transcendent, that we cannot look on it directly in our present state: there is, also, much in it that is mysterious and incomprehensible to us. In testimony of this, and in condescension to human weakness, the Lord covered himself with a cloud, he veiled his splendour in manifesting himself. And, although the revelation of the divine will which Christ gave under the gospel was clear, in comparison with that which was formerly given, and although the Holy Ghost was afterwards to give the disciples farther instruction, there were still many things mysterious, and many things altogether kept secret: in particular, the disciples were told that it was not for them to know the times, or the seasons, which the

\* Exod. xxiv. 16, xxxiii. 9.

† 1 Kings viii. 10.

‡ Harmony of Evangelists.

Father had put in his own power.\* To this remaining mystery some allusion may have been intended in Jesus being received out of sight by a cloud. Yet this seems to have been a bright cloud: at all events, there was something quite extraordinary in it, which clearly distinguished it from a common cloud; so that, while there was some concealment there was also a display of his glory. In fact, this was a magnificent departure out of the world; for he made the cloud his chariot, and walked upon the wings of the wind.

The last circumstance we have to notice is, that our Lord's ascension *was attended by angels*. In Acts i. 10, we read: "While they" (the disciples) "looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel"—evidently two angels. The holy angels are employed in forwarding, instrumentally, the glory of Christ, and the good of his people. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They ministered to our Lord personally on several very interesting occasions. They notified his conception; they celebrated his birth; they worshipped him after his temptation; they strengthened him in his agony; they were present and active at his resurrection; and now they attend at his ascension. This was foretold in these words in the 68th Psalm: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive." From this prediction, it is reasonable to suppose that the two angels whom the disciples saw were only a small part of the host who attended on the occasion. But here description is baffled, and imagination finds a field for its boldest flights. The Son of God ascends slowly, majestically, with the almost unveiled splendour of divinity. He is attended by thousands of glorious angels. His disciples stand gazing, and fixed in mute astonishment, with their arms stretched out after him. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." Though lost to human sight, how bright and dazzling would be his entrance into heaven! With what joyful acclamations would he be welcomed home to the possession of the glory he had with his Father before the world was! What a shout of triumph when he sat down on the throne at his Father's right hand! What a meeting between the Father

\* Acts i. 7.

and the Son! But this idea imposes silence: the words of inspiration can alone approach to the grandeur of the subject.

Having thus considered the circumstances of our Lord's ascension, let us proceed to consider—

II. *Its ends*, or the chief purposes for which he ascended.

1. Christ ascended, *in order to send down the gifts of the Holy Spirit*. These gifts are represented as noble presents which a king distributes at his coronation, or a conqueror at his triumph. According to this comparison, this was foretold in the 68th Psalm, and is thus described as fulfilled in Eph. iv., from the 7th verse: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." These gifts of the Spirit are generally divided into ordinary and extraordinary. We have this description, applicable, chiefly at least, to the extraordinary or miraculous gifts, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: \* "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."—"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues." These extraordinary gifts, which were shed down immediately on our Lord's ascension, were designed, and calculated by their striking nature, to awaken general attention, and to spread the gospel more speedily in the world; by these, too, the apostles and other inspired men were fully qualified for their office. The great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed by them that heard him, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and

\* 1 Cor. xii.

with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." But, when Christianity was completely unfolded, and extensively diffused, these miraculous gifts, becoming unnecessary, gradually died away.

The ordinary gifts of the Spirit are those which are necessary to personal salvation, necessary to give effect to the gospel, to enlighten the mind, to renew the heart, to sanctify, to comfort, and to confirm. These gifts were not withheld before the ascension of Christ, but they were given after it in greater extent and measure. Previous to this, "the Holy Ghost was not yet given" (comparatively), "because Jesus was not yet glorified." We are expressly assured that the abundant effusion of the Spirit, in all his gifts, was the consequence of Christ's ascension, and would not otherwise have taken place. "It is expedient for you," said he to his disciples, "that I go away: for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."\* All the most important gifts of the Spirit, namely, all those which are necessary to salvation, are permanent in the Church, and are daily sent down by our exalted Redeemer. Thus, sinners are called and sanctified, Churches are planted and watered, and the gospel kingdom will be perpetuated and extended till it fill the earth. This is one end of our Lord's ascension for which we ought to be very thankful. Let us bless him, who, having purchased the gifts of the Spirit by his death, ascended into heaven to bestow them: and let us earnestly pray that they may be bestowed on us in rich measure.

2. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, in order to *make intercession for his people*. When he offered himself a sacrifice for sin, the work of redemption, it is true, as to the meritorious part of it, was finished; but he had much more to do in the execution of his priestly office, and for this he ascended up on high. "He is a priest for ever." There were "many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this one, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."† His entrance into heaven for this end was prefigured by the high priest's entering into the most holy place on the great day of expiation, and sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy-seat. "For Christ is not

\* John xvi. 7.

† Heb. vii. 23.

entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." This intercession of Christ's seems to consist chiefly in his very presence continually presenting, as it were, before the throne of God, the sacrifice which he made of himself on earth. This is not a new sacrifice; for the one great sacrifice he offered was a perfect atonement for sin, and the full price of salvation. But his intercession is founded on that sacrifice, and is a continual display of what he has already done, in order that his people may actually obtain all the blessings he has purchased for them. Hence it is said,\* "In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain." Our Lord's intercession, however, is justly considered as including a direct signification of his will to the Father. This is implied in the very word intercession, which signifies pleading. The intercessory work of Christ is frequently represented as a praying to the Father. "Ask of me," saith the Father to the Son, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Our Lord himself also said, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." The intercessory prayers of Christ are very different (it should be observed) from the prayers of his people; in this respect, that his prayers are not so much humble supplications for unmerited favours, as petitions of right, claims of what is due to him in consequence of his own purchase. Even on earth, he addressed his Father, in filial confidence, saying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am."

But, whether his desires be expressed in words or not, if they are entertained, they are sure to be fulfilled. He takes charge, too, of the prayers and services of his people on earth, presents them before God, and secures for them a gracious acceptance. There is enough of sin in our best services to render them odious in the sight of a holy God, and to deprive us of the blessings we ask; but here is the way of certain success—Jesus, like the angel at the golden altar,† offers the incense of his merits along with the prayers of all saints. Through him we are directed to offer our prayers, as it is only through him we can become a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God. These are great privileges indeed; they are among

\* Rev. v. 6.

† Rev. viii. 3.

the blessings of the covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. On these depend the happiness and salvation of our souls. Do we not lie under the greatest obligations to the Redeemer, who, after he had merited these blessings by his death, ascended into heaven to procure the actual application of them by his intercession? Let us avail ourselves of this gracious arrangement. Let us commit our cause to his management, as our Intercessor and Advocate, assured that, if we do so, it cannot be lost.

3. Jesus Christ ascended, in order *that he might receive infinite power, happiness, and glory, as the reward of his humiliation.* Though infinitely powerful, happy, and glorious in his Godhead from eternity, he acquired a title to a reward by his mediatorial work. After his resurrection, he addressed his disciples in these words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." This power he acquired by his humiliation unto death; and he was exalted to the heavenly throne that he might take the exercise of it into his hands. Hence this application of the prophecy in the 110th Psalm, by Peter in the 2d chapter of the Acts: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For, David is not ascended into the heavens; but, he saith himself, 'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'" He is set down on his throne of glory, to exercise dominion over the universe, but especially over his Church. God hath "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."\* The foresight of this glorious reward supported him greatly under all his sufferings. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." His exaltation is also expressly declared to be the reward of his incarnation, sufferings, and death. "Let this mind be in you," writes

\* Eph. i. 20.

Paul to the Philippians, "which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Once more here: Our Lord ascended into heaven, *that he might prepare a place for his followers, and bring them home to himself.* When the hearts of his disciples sunk within them on his informing them that he was about to suffer death and to be separated from them, he addressed them in these encouraging words:,\* "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Hence, the apostle says to the Hebrews, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." As, when many persons travel together, it is customary for one to go before the rest, to provide a proper place for their reception, so Jesus has left his people on the road heavenward, and gone to prepare mansions for them where they may rest for ever. And how glorious the abode he has in readiness for them! It is the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. As Christ by his ascension has prepared this place of rest for them, so he has also secured their entrance into it. He has not gone up with the intention to live there solitary. It is not as under the law, when none were permitted to follow the high priest into the most holy place. Christ's ascension is the pledge of the glorious exaltation both of the souls and bodies of his people: and he will, in due time, bring them all home to himself, that they may be blessed in his society for ever. Here let us pause for the present.

\* John xiv. 1.



## LECTURE CXXXVII.

LUKE XXIV. 50-53.

THE SUBJECT OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST CONTINUED, AND  
CONCLUSION TO THE LECTURES.

HAVING considered the chief circumstances and ends of our Lord's ascension, we now come to consider, in the last place, *The practical effects which the consideration of the event should produce on us.*

1. It should lead us to *pay the Redeemer that divine homage which is so justly due to his name.* Luke here informs us, in the 52d verse, that when Jesus was carried up into heaven, the disciples "*worshipped him.*" To this homage his divinity fully entitled him. That the leading evidence of this may be before our minds, the following classes of proofs may be observed. The *names* of God are ascribed to the Son—Jehovah: "This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord (or Jehovah) our righteousness;" God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God"—"Immanuel, God with us"—"Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace."\* The *attributes* of God are ascribed to him. For example, eternity: "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting"—"Before Abraham was," said he, "I am;"† omniscience: "Lord, thou knowest all things," said Peter, "thou knowest that I love thee;" and he himself said, "I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts;" infinite power: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."‡ The *works* of God are ascribed to him—Creation: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made;" providence: "The government shall be on his shoulder;"

\* See also Rom. ix. 5; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. i. 8; 1 John v. 20; Rev. i. 8, xix. 16.

† Matt. xxviii. 20; Heb. i. 12; xiii. 8.

‡ Rev. i. 8.

the forgiving of sin: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" yet, "The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sin;" judgment: "God is judge himself," yet, "The Father judgeth no man"—"We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."\* *Divine worship* is commanded to be paid, and described as paid to him in Scripture: "When God bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him; and "all men" are commanded to "honour the Son even as they honour the Father."† There are also various expressions employed, in reference to the Son, which do not exactly fall under any of these heads, but which demonstrate his Godhead, and consequently, his claim on our worship.‡

Now, of all the circumstances in his history, none more illustrates his glory, none calls more loudly for divine homage, than his ascension. If he was worshipped at his entrance into this vale of tears—if, when God brought in the First-begotten into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him," surely, when he ascended in triumph, when he entered into the heavenly world, and sat down at the Father's right hand, all these exalted beings would crowd around him to pay their homage, and the glorified saints would cast their crowns at his feet. As for the disciples who witnessed his ascension, how becoming and appropriate was the homage they then rendered him, when they beheld his Godhead, as it were, shine brightly forth through his humanity, and when, after a long time, in which he presented externally no form, nor comeliness, he appeared fairer than the sons of men! As for us, we cannot (it is true) see him ascend, with the eye of sense, but we may by the eye of faith. We may suppose ourselves to be standing on the Mount of Olives, and witnessing the amazing sight which is here described. In these circumstances, therefore, and with all the corresponding feeling we can command, let us also worship our exalted Redeemer. Let us lift up our hearts and voices in the sentiments and language of devout adoration, saying with the Psalmist, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

\* See Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2; Mark ii. 5-10.

† See also Matt. viii. 2, xxviii. 9; Luke xxiii. 42; John ix. 38, xx. 28; Acts vii. 9; Phil. ii. 9, &c.; Rev. i. 5, v. 11-13.

‡ See John i. 14, x. 30; Phil. ii. 6; Heb. i. 3; Rev. xxii. 16.

2. It becomes us *to rejoice* on account of our Lord's ascension. Luke here states that, from witnessing the ascension of Christ, the disciples "*returned to Jerusalem with great joy.*" In like manner, this event furnishes us with the strongest reasons to rejoice, both on his account and on our own. Are we not delighted by the advancement of those who are dear to us? Is not their happiness an addition to ours? So also it is the language of our Saviour: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father." \* Great as is the pleasure arising from the enjoyment of the blessings purchased by the blood of our Redeemer, it must, to all generous minds, be a source of great additional satisfaction that he is not ultimately a sufferer. Happy event! Gratifying thought! that he who died for us is thus exalted! In this, too, we have every reason to rejoice on our own account, if we have any saving interest in Christ. This was the concluding scene of his mediatorial office below, and showed that his work was accepted. How reviving, also, to think that he lives God over all, and blessed for ever, who has promised that all things shall work together for our good!—to think that all power in heaven and on earth is given to Him who has promised to be with his Church always, even to the end of the world!—to think that he has triumphed over all our spiritual enemies, and, therefore, that we cannot be attacked without his permission, and that we cannot be destroyed!—to think that so majestic a Being should deign to describe himself as making preparations for our reception, that we may dwell with him, be like him, and see him as he is! And what shall be said of that reason for rejoicing which arises from the consideration of the union of our nature with the divine in the person of our exalted Lord? Great is the mystery of godliness, that God should be at all manifest in the flesh. But greater still is the mystery that this union should be permanent. What a thought! The human nature on the throne of heaven! Angels worshipping him who has our own bodily likeness! How astonishing must this thought have appeared to us, if we have ever fixed our mind intensely on it! It is true that there is nothing in this to encourage us in pride, and that, on the contrary, it serves most strikingly to display the grace of God triumphing over our unworthiness. But surely, when this is properly considered, it appears to furnish just reason

\* John xiv. 28.

for grateful joy. Lord, what is man, that thou hast thus been mindful of him? or what the son of man, that thou hast conferred on him this transcendent honour?

3. Our Lord's ascension should lead us *unhesitatingly to trust in him for salvation*. It is thus demonstrated that he is, in every respect, qualified and able to save us. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Let us confidently look to him, and rely on him, for acceptance with God and complete deliverance. Let us firmly trust in him who, as we have already noticed, not only died to purchase our salvation, but lives, and is exalted, to bestow it upon us. Let the awakened sinner take courage from this consideration, and apply for mercy and help. Let the confirmed believer, too, maintain a constant dependence for the forgiveness of his daily imperfections through the merit and intercession of his glorious advocate, "Jesus Christ, the righteous." Happy are all who are reconciled to God through the death of his Son, and who are thereby interested in his intercession. Their hope is placed on an omnipotent Saviour, and it can never be lost. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

4. Christ's ascension should encourage us *to engage with liveliness in religious exercises*. Luke here tells us, that, after the disciples had returned to Jerusalem from witnessing their Master's ascension, they "*were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.*" We are all bound to serve and wait on the Lord in the exercises of devotion; but sin, having polluted our nature, incapacitates us for a comfortable access, and even debars us from all access, to his throne. The guilty conscience is afraid of God; and He abominates the prayers of the wicked. But the virtue of Christ's blood which was shed on earth, and which, now that he is ascended, he presents before God, purifies the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. What an encouragement to approach the Lord have we in the fact of our having this exalted and divine friend to appear for us! "Seeing, then, we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest

who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but" one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How encouraging to be assured that, through his advocacy, all our services will be accepted, and all we ask will be granted! "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

5. The consideration of our Lord's ascension should *raise our thoughts and affections to heaven*. It is said, in Acts i. 10, that the disciples "looked stedfastly towards heaven as he went up." They could not turn away their eyes, but continued to follow him with their earnest looking, till the angels said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" In like manner, it becomes us to raise our thoughts and affections to heaven, whither our Redeemer is gone. Our hope, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, should enter into that which is within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. Let us never forget our Saviour, though his bodily presence is withdrawn from the earth; but let us habitually remember him, and meditate on what he is now doing for us on high. Let us be careful to have our conversation in heaven—to live as becomes those who are candidates for an inheritance in that country, and whose hearts are already there. Let us comply with the exhortation addressed to the Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

*Lastly.* Our Lord's ascension *should carry forward our thoughts to his second coming*. The angels said to the men of Galilee, as they were gazing up into heaven, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come

in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”\* The exact time is not revealed, but it is fixed, and well known to God. Jesus will come again, unexpectedly, and suddenly, at the end of time. He will come again as he went into heaven, in the same manner, with similar glory, and in similar circumstances. As a cloud received him out of their sight, so John says,† “Behold, he cometh with clouds;” and our Lord himself said, before the high priest and council, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”‡ As he ascended in the presence of angels, so he “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels;”§ when he shall come to take vengeance on his enemies, but to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. This last event of his second coming will be very different from his first coming into the world; and it will also be much more splendid than his ascension. He came at first in lowliness, and with sin imputed to him, that he might suffer and atone for it: he will come again in glory, without sin, and for the salvation of them that look for him. He ascended in the presence of a few disciples, and a detachment of angels; he will come again in the presence of an assembled creation. “Every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth” (who have proved disobedient) “shall wail because of him.” Already the enraptured soul anticipates the splendours of the day when all the redeemed shall hail his return to the earth, and when ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, shall celebrate his advent in ravishing strains of celestial melody. He appears in the unveiled glories of divinity. And is this he of Nazareth, who was despised and rejected of men, and had not where to lay his head? It is even he, returning according to his promise! O how unlike the helpless babe in Bethlehem’s manger! how unlike the Man of Sorrows who was agonized in Gethsemane, and expired on Calvary! A glorious effulgence adorns those temples which were once crowned with thorns. Unspeakable dignity shines in that visage which was more marred than that of any man. The reed is become the sceptre of universal sway; and the robe of mock royalty waves majestic in folds of light. But when he descends the second time, it will be that he may ascend the second time; and, glorious as was his first ascension, his

\* Acts i. 11.    † Rev. i. 7.    ‡ Matt. xxvi. 64.    § 2 Thess. i. 7.

second will be far more so. His second ascension, also, will differ from his first in this, that whereas, in his first, he was parted from his disciples, and left them in this world of trial below, in his second, he will leave none of them behind, but take them all along with him to form part of his glorious retinue, to enter with him into heaven, and to be blessed in his immediate presence for ever. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then" they who "are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall" they "ever be with the Lord." May we all be prepared for that delightful yet tremendous day! And, as He who testifieth these things saith, "Surely, I come quickly," may we be enabled to say from the heart, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Such, then, are the practical effects which the consideration of our Lord's ascension should produce on us.

As a conclusion to the whole history, there is subjoined the emphatic word, "*Amen.*" This word is found at the end of all the four Gospels. The circumstance of this word being wanting in some of the best manuscript copies of Luke, has led many to think that it did not form part of the original, but was afterwards appended by some transcriber. However this may have been, the word forms a very appropriate conclusion for us. In here saying, Amen, we declare our belief of the truth of the whole history, and express an earnest desire that the blessings it describes may be ours, and assent most cordially to the praises and blessings which the disciples are just before declared to have ascribed to God. The Lord be praised for this authentic and beautiful record of facts, in which we are so deeply interested! "Many other signs truly did Jesus," and many other sayings uttered he, "in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name." The Lord grant that this design may be happily fulfilled in us! Surely, to this prayer every one of us will subjoin a hearty Amen.

Thus have we finished the exposition of the Gospel according to Luke, in a course of one hundred and thirty-seven Lectures. We might have gone through the whole

in a much shorter time, had it not been that (however many and great the defects in the execution) we were unwilling to proceed hastily, without carefully noticing, more or less, almost everything that belongs to this evangelist's history, and without taking time to bring prominently forward the leading points which seemed most calculated to be useful.

Since we entered on the examination of this Gospel, many, many, who opened up the book, and turned to the first chapter along with us, have finished their course: and now they are no more seen in the midst of us. Let this affecting thought solemnly impress our minds; let it inspire us with gratitude to God that we are preserved: and let it excite in us a growing desire carefully to improve, while we have them, all our opportunities of preparing for eternity.

And what a wonderful history, from first to last, is this on which we have been meditating! How eventful, and how interesting in itself! and how directly and vitally important to us! How rich in edification, and comfort, this particular account of the personal history of our Redeemer, in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension—embodying, as it also does, so many of his miracles, prophecies, parables, and discourses! On a retrospect of the whole, let us view and acknowledge Christ both as the Son of God and the Son of man—as our teacher, instructing us in the knowledge of the truth—as our Saviour, working out for us a justifying righteousness by his meritorious obedience, even unto death—as our Lord and Master, whose commandments we are bound to obey—and as our perfect pattern, whose example, in all that is imitable by us, we are called on to copy. Let us all remember, too, that the exercises on this book in which we have been engaged, must prove to us either the “savour of life unto life or the savour of death unto death;” and that we shall have to give an account of them before the Judge of all. May the Lord forgive our sins and errors in speaking and hearing from this sacred book! and may he graciously accept of us in these our very imperfect services! In the midst of much shortcoming, it may be hoped that these studies have not been altogether in vain. May they prove the means of permanently impressing our minds with a more full, and distinct, and comprehensive view of the history of Christ and of redemption, than we should otherwise have had. May the result be the commencement of serious and saving impressions on some of you who have hitherto been living in darkness and unbe-



lief; and also the encouraging of those of you who formerly loved the Word of God, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now, unto Him who is all and in all in this history—unto Him who is all our salvation and all our desire—unto the Faithful and True Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth—unto our once rejected and crucified, but now exalted and most honoured Redeemer—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

THE END.

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